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M. A. Krutogolov

TALKS
ON SOVIET
DEMOCRACY



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS • Moscow

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Translated from the Russian by *Barry Jones*

М. А. Крутоголов

БЕСЕДЫ О СОВЕТСКОЙ ДЕМОКРАТИИ

На английском языке

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English translation © Progress Publishers 1980

*Printed in the Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics*

К $\frac{11001-665}{014(01)-80}$ 81—80

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FROM THE
AUTHOR

I have had conversations in many countries with those who measured democracy by the number of parties and candidates standing at elections, the duels between parliamentarians, the conflict between government and parliament or the enforced retirement of heads of state.

I have also had to listen frequently to anti-communist propaganda which opposes the bourgeois state as the ideal of complete and unlimited freedom to the Soviet political system. The same is said in the numerous publications that regularly appear in these countries—pseudo-scientific books, articles and pamphlets—and in the many radio broadcasts beamed to the Soviet Union. The idea, which has been current for decades, that bourgeois democracy is the only possible form of democracy, is perhaps one of the hardest prejudices to eradicate, and in the West the number of people that hold this prejudice is still very considerable. They have grown accustomed to identifying the concept of democracy with certain formal attributes of the bourgeois-democratic state. And in so far as Soviet democracy differs from bourgeois democracy not only in essentials but also in forms, it cannot be accommodated in their habitual thinking.

True, the Soviet Union does not have the same form of democracy as exists in the 'free world'. As a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution over 60 years ago the USSR has established and developed another, new democracy of a much higher type, which is called Soviet, socialist democracy. It too has its principles and traditions. Lenin wrote: 'The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the

same time, it marks a break with *bourgeois* democracy and the rise of a *new, epoch-making type* of democracy...¹.

On October 7, 1977, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR unanimously approved the new Constitution of the USSR, which sums up the results of the 60-odd years. It is a clear witness to the fact that the ideas proclaimed by the October Revolution, the testimony of Lenin, have been successfully put into practice.

The principles and aims of Soviet democracy are quite different from those of bourgeois democracy, as are its forms, methods and scope. In the following talks I would like to show you what Soviet democracy looks like today, considering it not only in the traditional manner, that is vertically, from the lowest to the highest organs of state power, but also horizontally or in the way it is felt in the life of society and the individual. In June 1974, at a meeting with the electorate Leonid Brezhnev said: 'Democracy is just an empty word if it does not cover the surroundings in which the person does his daily work, applies his creative energy.'²

I would like to show you how Soviet democracy 'covers the surroundings', how together with the classical forms it functions in the sphere of production, both industrial and agricultural, and how it is exercised in the sphere of culture and social relations.

This book is based on lectures and talks on the Soviet state and democracy delivered by the author at public meetings and at universities in France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and Britain and in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

My audiences always listened with great interest, asking hundreds of questions, some of which surprised me considerably.

Many of the institutions, problems and solutions that are so normal, understandable and obvious to us in the Soviet Union, appeared to my audiences abroad as vague, doubtful, odd or astonishing. This gave me the opportunity for understanding the peculiarities of their perception of, or approach to, the various aspects of Soviet reality, and treating those problems that interested them most. All this I have tried to take into consideration in the present book.

WHAT IS SOVIET DEMOCRACY?

Millions of people throughout the world have followed attentively the successes of the Soviet Union in the building of a communist society and the active, purposeful work of the Communist Party and the Soviet state in the interests of ensuring lasting peace on earth.

The Great October Socialist Revolution which took place in Russia in 1917 freed the masses of the working people from exploitation and intellectual slavery. It aroused millions and millions of people into creative activity and inspired them with the great deal of socialism and communism.

The result of the October Revolution was the birth of the Soviet socialist state. And now, 60-odd years later, people all over the world, enemies and friends, are discussing and writing about the Soviet state and socialist democracy. How is it that the Soviet Union arouses such interest? Undoubtedly because its very existence and rapid development shows that the Marxist-Leninist idea that the working people themselves can govern their state and dispose of its wealth has been put into effect.

The seizure of political power by the working people headed by the working class and the creation of the first workers' and peasants' state was the first step in the revolutionary transformation of capitalist into socialist society. This was a change that involved the abolition of private ownership of the basic means of production, and the nationalisation of industry, the banks, the railways, the mines and the land. There were other problems: the liquidation of class and, in some cases, of feudal

privileges and the channeling of millions of small privately owned peasant households into the public socialist economy via cooperation.

The solution of these important and hitherto unknown problems took a whole historical period—a period of transition. During this period when all aspects of society were in a state of flux, the new socialist trends combined and clashed with the relics of the old exploitative society. Alongside the growing socialist economy the private capitalist and small-scale peasant commodity farming continued to coexist in a number of areas with elements of feudal and even patriarchal-communal modes of production. This economy predetermined the social composition of society, where together with the working class and the non-proletarian elements that supported it (primarily the peasant masses) there also remained exploitative elements. Then again it was necessary to liquidate the hunger and destruction brought about by the First World War and the Civil War.

The young Soviet state had to perform new and hitherto unknown functions. Of paramount importance was the economy and that huge complex of economic organisations which, with the end of private ownership, had been taken over by the working people and their state. The state became responsible for schools, kindergartens, theatres, printing houses, museums and institutes. This meant that the state had assumed the burden not only of economic organisation, but of culture and education as well, which included struggle against the private proprietary mentality. Consequently, together with these tremendously complex functions the state was required to solve the evermore pressing problem of control over the measure of labour and consumption so as to encourage and promote conscientious work for the good of society and to strictly observe the socialist principle: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat.'

These functions at first had to be fulfilled by workers and peasants who lacked experience in running the economy and, furthermore, fulfilled in conditions of civil war and devastation.

Resistance by the dispossessed capitalists demanded that the workers' and peasants' state take repressive steps against the activity of the exploiting classes within the country. Without action of this kind it would be impossible to consolidate working people's power.

The foreign policy of the state during the transition period consisted primarily in defending socialist gains from the incursions and continual threats by the imperialist powers. It was characterised by the desire for peaceful cooperation between countries with different socio-political systems.

Under these conditions only one class was capable of guaranteeing the victory of socialist social relations, curbing the petty-bourgeoisie and breaking down the resistance of the exploiters. This was the proletariat which was firmly supported by its broad union with the mass of the working people. This is why the whole period of transition from capitalism to socialism was a period of the growth, consolidation and implementation of *the dictatorship of the proletariat*. The basic instrument for the exercise of this dictatorship was the Soviet state. It was the world's first state of workers and peasants, and had clashed in fierce combat with the exploiting classes, which, backed by international capital, had unleashed civil war.

In this situation the Soviet state had to break up the exploitative state apparatus fairly rapidly.

The Soviet state was faced with the necessity of depriving the exploiting elements of their electoral rights so as to prevent them from influencing the work of the organs of state power. The 1918 Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic deprived of active and passive electoral rights persons employing hired labour for the purpose of extracting profit; persons living on unearned income; private traders and their middlemen; priests; members of the tsar's family and former police and gendarmes. The total number of such persons was never more than 2-3 per cent of the population, and the above restrictions were revoked in 1936.

Does this justify the claim made by some critics of the Soviet

system that the dictatorship of the proletariat is incompatible with democracy of any kind? Certainly not. While it deprived the overthrown exploiters of the right to vote, the Soviet state was making use of all possible means for drawing the broad mass of the working people into the management of the country. This task was achieved primarily through the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies. They were elected by direct vote at the enterprises, military units and at working people's meetings at their place of residence. During the first ten years of Soviet power 19 million people were elected deputies to Soviets, delegates to Congresses of Soviets, and members of executive committees in the Russian Federation alone.

All the organs of state received their mandate from the Soviets. Judges and people's assessors were elected from among the working people.

By the mid-thirties the foundation of socialism had been built—a tremendous achievement for the working class and the working masses led by it. This new stage was characterised first and foremost by the complete establishment of socialist ownership of the means of production in its two forms—that of the whole people (state) and that of collective farms and co-operatives. By 1937 the socialist sector was producing 99.8 per cent of industrial output and 98.5 per cent of agricultural output.

The economic victory of socialism entailed deep changes in the social structure of Soviet society: the exploiting classes were liquidated; therefore, there was no need for preventing their hostile activity, a function exercised by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, this did not mean that the dictatorship of the proletariat was no longer required. It was necessary as a guarantee of the final consolidation and development of socialist social relations—a task which it took a long time to complete. It was necessary to organise the management of the rapidly growing industry, improve the system of planning, which now for the first time in history encompassed the entire economy, and to ensure the proportional development of the various industries. The

completion of the collectivisation campaign radically changed the life of the peasants. It was now necessary to strengthen socialist relations in the countryside, gradually eradicate the private proprietary mentality and individualistic habits that had over the centuries become ingrained and to introduce new collective forms of life and labour and shape new traditions. The former exploitative elements no longer posed a threat, but combatting bourgeois attitudes and those who held them together with the necessity for enhancing the unity of society still remained on the agenda.

Thus, after the foundation of socialism had been laid, the workers were faced with the task of building developed socialism. The fulfilment of these complex tasks was connected with a whole historical stage in the life of society, during which the functions of the proletarian dictatorship were gradually completed and the state of proletarian dictatorship developed into the state of the whole people.

Whereas during the transition period one of the main functions of the Soviet state was the suppression of the hostile exploiting classes in their attempts to restore the capitalist order, during the building of a developed socialist society this function became no longer necessary. But other functions of the Soviet state, assumed during the transition period, particularly in the organisation of the economy and the cultural and educational fields, were retained in their entirety and, indeed, expanded further. Such functions included the defence of socialist gains from the threat of imperialist aggression and the consistent implementation of a policy of peaceful coexistence with countries belonging to different social and economic systems.

As the aims and tasks of the working people became increasingly the aims and tasks of the whole people, the functions of the Soviet state were increasingly fulfilled by the whole people and in this sense ceased to be functions of a proletarian dictatorship.

The changes in the class structure of the population and the concomitant changes in the tasks and functions of the state

gave rise to corresponding transformations in the organisation of state power. With the adoption of the 1936 Constitution the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies became Soviets of Working People's Deputies. Instead of the Congresses of Soviets system, a unified system of Soviets of Working People's Deputies was introduced. These were elected directly by the people all the way up from the local Soviets to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. A new electoral system was introduced giving universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

These important stages in the development of the Soviet state and socialist democracy were reached at a time when the country was encircled by capitalist states. The tense situation abroad, the subsequent war unleashed by Hitlerite fascism against the Soviet Union and the need to rehabilitate the war-ravaged economy, slowed down the transformation of the state of proletarian dictatorship into the state of the whole people, but could not hold back the advance of our country.

With the formation of the world socialist system the USSR broke out of the capitalist encirclement. Both at home and abroad socialism had become a mighty force. Considerable importance now attached to such functions of the Soviet state as closer friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance with the fraternal socialist countries.

As the Soviet Union entered the period of developed socialism, the state of proletarian dictatorship became transformed into a *state of the whole people* under the political guidance of the working class.

Reflecting this contemporary stage of development Article I of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR states: 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of the whole people, expressing the will and interests of the workers, peasants, and intelligentsia, the working people of all the nations and nationalities of the country.'

Today a developed socialist society has been built in the USSR. At this stage, when socialism is developing on its own basis, the creative forces of the new system and the advantages

of the socialist way of life become more fully apparent and the working people gain greater enjoyment of the fruits of their great revolutionary gains.

The Preamble to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR characterises developed socialist society thus:

'It is a society in which powerful productive forces and progressive science and culture have been created, in which the well-being of the people is constantly rising, and more and more favourable conditions are being provided for the all-round development of the individual.

'It is a society of mature socialist social relations, in which, on the basis of the drawing together of all classes and social strata and of the juridical and factual equality of all its nations and nationalities and their fraternal co-operation, a new historical community of people has been formed—the Soviet people.

'It is a society of high organisational capacity, ideological commitment, and consciousness of the working people, who are patriots and internationalists.

'It is a society in which the law of life is concern of all for the good of each and concern of each for the good of all.

'It is a society of true democracy, the political system of which ensures effective management of all public affairs, ever more active participation of the working people in running the state, and the combining of citizens' real rights and freedoms with their obligations and responsibility to society.

'Developed socialist society is a natural, logical stage on the road to communism.'

The characterisation of the state of the whole people and developed socialism as contained in the 1977 Constitution has attracted much attention abroad.

There were also comments in the Western press to the effect that in renouncing the dictatorship of the proletariat the Soviet Union is somehow making concessions, or that it has found a more euphemistic formula for precisely the same phenomenon. There have even been attempts to attack the Constitution from the 'left' with the thesis that it was drawn up by those whose

understanding of Marxist teaching on the withering away of the state under communism was inconsistent.

The inadequacy and contradictoriness of these and similar statements is immediately apparent.

The point does not lie in renouncing the dictatorship of the proletariat or the idea of the withering away of the state, or in replacing one term by another, more euphemistically phrased. It is rather a matter of consistent historical development, in the process of which the Soviet state has reached a new and higher stage. The 1977 Constitution mentions with pride the dictatorship of the proletariat as part of the road traversed by the Soviet Union.

These are its landmarks.

The first Soviet Constitution—the Constitution of the RSFSR (1918) reflected the victory of the socialist revolution, consolidated the class essence of the Soviet state as the state of proletarian dictatorship, established the fundamental principles of its organisation and activity and proclaimed the building of socialism its fundamental goal.

In 1922 the First Congress of Soviets approved the unification of the Soviet Republics into a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The 1924 Constitution of the USSR showed the workers of the world an example of a multinational state, built on the basis of proletarian internationalism and close cooperation between equal nations.

The 1936 Constitution gave legislative force to the victory of socialism in the USSR and the basic social and state organisation of socialist society.

Over forty years have passed since then, and tremendous changes have taken place in the Soviet Union. In 1961 the Programme of the CPSU adopted by the 22nd Party Congress, declared: 'The working class is the only class in history that does not aim to perpetuate its power... the dictatorship of the proletariat has fulfilled its historic mission and has ceased to be indispensable in the USSR from the point of view of the tasks of internal development.'³ Today a developed socialist

society has been built in the USSR, which is a new stage in the transition to the communist formation. At this stage, socialism, which is already developing on its own basis, is able to more fully reveal its creative potential and its humane essence.

Developed socialism is that stage in mature Soviet society when the totality of social relations are restructured on the collectivist principles that are inherent in socialism. Hence the wide scope for the operation of the laws of socialism and for bringing out its advantages in all spheres of the life of society. Hence the organic integrity and dynamism of the social system, its political stability and internal unity. Hence the growing convergence of all classes and social groups, all nations and nationalities and the formation of a historically new social and international community of people—the Soviet people. Hence the creation of a new socialist culture and the establishment of a new socialist way of life. And hence the gradual transformation of our state into a communist social self-government, to which the participation of millions of Soviet citizens in the running of state and society bears witness.

Developed socialism is characterised by the further strengthening of the two basic forms of socialist ownership. It fully establishes the socialist principle of distribution: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.' The relations of production and distribution in cooperatives and on the collective farms are becoming increasingly similar in their essentials to the relations of production at state enterprises.

These economic processes influence the development of the social structure of society. According to Article 19 of the Soviet Constitution, 'The social basis of the USSR is the unbreakable alliance of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia'.

The rapid growth of industry and the introduction of scientific and technological developments underlie the growth and significance of the working class. The working class, which now accounts for more than 60 per cent of the labour force (in 1939 it was 33.5 per cent), produces the largest share of gross social product and possesses the high level of consciousness and

organisation and an ever growing political and cultural level, continues to exercise its leading role in the society of developed socialism.

As a result of the increasing use of technology in farming, the collective farmers' position approximates to that of the industrial workers. This produces changes in their social attitudes and psychology and provides the basis for the gradual overcoming of the differences between town and village, between the working class and the peasantry and for the greater strengthening of the union between workers and peasants.

The role of the intelligentsia also continues to grow. Whereas in 1926 there were less than 3 million workers engaged chiefly in forms of mental labour, by 1975 their number had risen to 34 million. Their work is having an increasing influence on raising the level of social production. At the same time the difference between physical and mental labour is gradually eroding.

The state of the whole people organises the building of the material and technical base of communism and transforms socialist relations into communist, controls the measure of labour and consumption, guarantees rising living standards, protects the rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens, socialist law and order and socialist property, educates the people in the spirit of conscious discipline and a communist attitude to work, provides reliable guarantees for the defence and safety of the country, develops fraternal cooperation with the socialist countries and upholds the cause of world peace.

The socialist state bodies are largely engaged in improving management of the economy. This is why the organs of economic planning and management take precedence over all the other organs of state and specialists in the various fields of production hold the leading place among civil servants.

No less wide and complex is the work of the state in the field of culture and education, for steady development of the economy is dependent not only on the people's standard of living but also on their cultural level.

The economic and cultural work of the state under developed socialism is on a scale hitherto unknown to history.

In the state of the whole people, just as under the state of proletarian dictatorship, the working class remains the leading force of society. The only difference is that in the state of the whole people the position of the working class becomes the position of the whole people. Furthermore, the party of the working class—the Communist Party—which expresses the interests of the whole of the Soviet people remains the leading nucleus of state and social organisations, just as it was under the state of proletarian dictatorship.

At the same time the state of the whole people possesses a number of specific features which characterise it as an independent stage in the development of the socialist state. These features consist primarily in that the state of the whole people is the organisation of the whole people united behind the working class. The social base for the state of the whole people is the whole of society. The power of the working class, expressing the interests of the wide masses of the working people, becomes the power of the whole people, because all other strata of society are raised to an understanding of the goals and interests of its advance class, and the will of the working class becomes the will of the whole people. The political basis of the Soviet state has evolved from the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies through the Soviets of Working People's Deputies to the Soviets of People's Deputies.

Another feature of the state of the whole people is the higher level of relationship between the individual and society. This is expressed, on the one hand, in the fuller guarantees of political, economic and other rights and interests of citizens as provided by the state, and, on the other, in a correct understanding of their rights and duties to society and the strict observance of the laws of the socialist community. The socialist organisation of society in the name of each and the socialist discipline of each in the name of society is a principle which

is becoming increasingly an organic part of the lives of millions of people.

An important aspect of the state of the whole people consists in the new international climate in which it is developing. The internal and external functions of the state are now closely linked with the world system of socialist states, many of whom are currently building a developed socialist society, and with closer cooperation with the fraternal socialist countries. This is shown in the continuous improvement of the international socialist division of labour through coordinated economic planning, specialisation and cooperation within the framework of the world socialist system, in the study of collective experience and in the mutual support and cooperation which are leading to the gradual surmounting of the historical differences in the levels of economic development between individual socialist countries. 'The USSR,' declares Article 30 of the new Constitution, 'as part of the world system of socialism and of the socialist community, promotes and strengthens friendship, cooperation, and comradely mutual assistance with other socialist countries on the basis of the principle of socialist internationalism, and takes an active part in socialist economic integration and the socialist international division of labour.' Particular stress today is laid on raising the effectiveness of economic ties with the socialist countries on the basis of a long-term programme for the further development of socialist economic integration. According to the Preamble of the new Constitution, 'the supreme goal of the Soviet state is the building of a classless communist society in which there will be public, communist self-government. The main aims of the people's socialist state are: to lay the material and technical foundation of communism, to perfect socialist social relations and transform them into communist relations, to mould the citizen of communist society, to raise the people's living and cultural standards, to safeguard the country's security, and to further the consolidation of peace and development of international co-operation.'

The achievement of developed socialism in the USSR pro-

vides a convincing answer to the question which for centuries has troubled people's minds on the possibility of establishing a reasoned order for human life with just social relations and harmony between the individual and society.

It was the socialist system that liquidated the sources of class and national oppression and the exploitation of man by man. It ensured political equality and the rights of each man to work, to education, to social insurance, to health protection, to rest and leisure and to housing; it brought broad democratic freedoms to the mass of the people. Socialism first established the unity of all working classes and social groups in society, overcame national and racial prejudices, and united the working peoples in joint struggle for the progressive social ideals. Socialism gave rise to a fundamentally new way of life, which embodied the highest aspirations of mankind and developed in men a feeling of human dignity, social duty and comradely mutual assistance.

Under the socialist system a new type of individual has been formed—a free worker and a citizen with full rights, to whom individualism, social pessimism and lack of confidence in future are completely alien. He is educated in the spirit of collectivism, is fully aware of his rights and duties and plays an active role in social and state affairs. Under socialism all the achievements of science and technology, economics and culture and all the wealth of society are used for the benefit of the individual, for the benefit of the working man.

The achievements of the USSR are organically linked with the development of socialist democracy and the very origins of the Soviet state signified the appearance of an historically new type of democracy.

Democracy is generally thought of as being a form of state organisation based on the principles of popular rule, freedom and equality. All these principles in one form or another were proclaimed before the advent of socialism. In an exploitative society, however, the democratic forms and institutions are inevitably limited and formal in character. They largely serve the

interests of that class which holds the reins of political power and owns the means of production—the slave-owners in the ancient world, the feudal nobility in the middle ages and the bourgeoisie in the capitalist period. Socialism for the first time gave the concept ‘democracy’ its true meaning, making its principles genuinely democratic.

The fundamental principles of socialist democracy were formulated by Marx and Engels and became part of the theory of scientific communism dealing with the socialist state. Lenin not only developed this teaching, he was present at the formation of the new type of state and directly guided the building of socialist democracy. Lenin emphasised: ‘There can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy.’⁴ Practically all aspects of this process were given scientific substantiation by the leader of the October Revolution and his ideas have lost none of their relevance today, for they serve as the theoretical basis for all practical work in improving socialist democracy.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union attaches particular significance to the development and expansion of democracy. It firmly adheres to the Leninist ideas and consistently puts them into practice. The Leninist policy for the utmost development of socialist democracy was clearly expressed in the Party Programme, and given a considerable attention at the 25th CPSU Congress.

The Congress noted in particular that the overall development of the political system of society was one of the main directions in the building of communism. This involves improving the socialist state and democracy, strengthening the legal foundations of the state and of public life and stepping up the work of the public organisations.

Article 9 of the 1977 Constitution states: ‘The principal direction in the development of the political system of Soviet society is the extension of socialist democracy, namely ever broader participation of citizens in managing the affairs of society and the state, continuous improvement of the machine-

ry of state, heightening of the activity of public organisations, strengthening of the system of people’s control, consolidation of the legal foundations of the functioning of the state and of public life, greater openness and publicity, and constant responsiveness to public opinion.’

Extensive participation by the working people in the exercise of state power and the decisive influence of the people on state policy in all its aspects is the main purpose and the main principle as well as the characteristic feature of the political system of developed socialism, which distinguishes it radically from all bourgeois political systems.

The guarantee to all members of society of their free and fruitful labour, their leisure, their unhindered access to knowledge and to the achievements of science and culture, the development of their creative potential and their active participation in socio-political life is the aim and purpose of Soviet democracy.

If we attempt a generalised account of Soviet democracy we can see an organisation and form of state power which

a) guarantees genuine popular rule when power belongs to the overwhelming majority of the population—the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia;

b) offers citizens, irrespective of race, nationality, sex, religion, place of residence, social origins, and property a wide range of rights and individual freedoms, which allow them to participate equally in the running of the state, in the exercise of political power;

c) ensures all members of society real opportunities for achieving a definite level of cultural and political development, which is essential for understanding their rights and freedoms and correctly exercising them;

d) establishes the material and juridical guarantees for these rights and freedoms and consistently implements them;

e) guarantees citizens the practical possibility of exercising their rights and freedoms.

But this is by no means an exhaustive account of Soviet

democracy. Saying that it has democratised, even if very extensively, its known 'classical forms', i.e. made parliament and other central and local organs of power and government genuinely representative and functional, is not enough. It has gone much further than that, spreading its principles throughout society and to all aspects of social life. Whenever Soviet man is at work—at the factory, the farm or the institute, he is surrounded by the same atmosphere, and the same democratic principles function as in state life.

The strength of the socialist state lies in its links with the people and the way it draws increasingly wide sections of the population into the running of the state and public affairs. This is just what socialist democracy is called upon to guarantee, and its improvement and expansion are the main direction of the political development of Soviet society on the road to communism.

The radical difference between Soviet democracy and bourgeois democracy consists in the fact that socialism transfers the centre of gravity from formal democratic rights and freedoms to their practical exercise and the creation of such social, economic and political conditions as would ensure citizens the real opportunity to exercise their state-given rights and actively participate in its affairs.

Though in terms of class content socialist democracy is a qualitatively new political phenomenon, it is neither in theory nor in practice divorced from the heritage of the past. Over the centuries the popular masses have fought for the right to participate in state affairs, for political freedoms and social rights. The results of this struggle have been expressed in a series of democratic institutions, which were exacted from the dominant classes and have become part of man's political culture. Socialism has inherited all the most important democratic gains of the working people and either adapted them to new conditions or significantly altered or enriched them.

Alongside its creative approach to the heritage of the past,

socialism has created hitherto unknown principles and forms of democracy. Tremendous possibilities in this respect lie in the very nature of the socialist system. Thus, social ownership of the means of production implies that the object of democratic activity (management and control) is now the economy and culture, those important and extensive aspects of social life which were always controlled by private individuals or organisations, and under contemporary state-monopoly capitalism are the subject of partial regulation by the state.

The building of a developed socialist society and the further advance towards communism have given rise to new means and methods for working people's participation in the affairs of society and now lead to the deepening of other aspects of socialist democracy. The steady growth of social wealth has increased the importance of the social rights of the workers, and the development of culture and the ideological and moral consciousness of the people have created conditions for the wider exercise of diverse political freedoms.

Socialist democracy was not made in a ready form. It passed through various stages of development. It should be remembered that it took bourgeois democracy more than two centuries to develop, whereas socialist democracy only emerged 60-odd years ago. It would therefore be wrong to expect that it could achieve perfection in such a short historical period. After all its formation and development is not a volitive but an objective, continual process determined by the totality of internal and external conditions.

Soviet society is moving forward and this process embraces social relations and politics as well as economics and culture. The CPSU considers it a matter of the utmost importance to improve the socialist state and its work in all fields of public activity.

In his report to the 25th Party Congress, Leonid Brezhnev said: 'We see the improvement of our socialist democracy as consisting above all in a steady effort to ensure ever fuller participation by the working people in running all the affairs of

society, in further developing the democratic principles of our state system, and in creating the conditions for the all-round flourishing of the individual. This is the direction in which the Party has worked and will continue to work in the future'.⁵

The Soviet state is a state of the whole people. This is not only because it expresses the will of the whole people, but because the work of the organs of state power, subjected as it is to the interests of the working people, is carried out with their daily support and participation. The development of the political system (the political superstructure of society) under the guidance of the Party involves both the strengthening of the socialist state and the development of socialist democracy.

The political system of socialism is based on the widest application of the principle of popular representation. It is embodied today in the Soviets of People's Deputies, which run all the affairs of society and the state.

But the socialist political system also implies the utilisation of direct democracy on an ever increasing scale.

There are various ways and means for Soviet citizens to participate in decision-making at a local, factory or state level. These include election to the representative institutions, referendums, voluntary work in the organs of state, nationwide discussion of the drafts of the most important laws, and work in the Communist Party, trade unions, Komsomol and other public organisations, economic cooperatives, creative unions and societies of all kinds, such as those relating to the different industries and professions or those that are held at place of residence or work, etc.

A characteristic feature of the socialist system is its organic synthesis of the methods of representative and direct democracy.

Thus the Soviets are not only organs of state power, but a mass public organisation relying on wide support from activists.

The mass public organisations show initiative in placing before the Soviets questions both of national and local importance,

and in working out draft laws and resolutions of the Soviet government and the governments of the Union republics and decisions of the local Soviets.

The socialist political system covers a powerful and ramified network of political and social organisations, which represent both the general and specific interests of the working people, accumulate and direct their energy to the attainment of the goals of communist construction. As stated in article 6 of the Constitution of the USSR, 'the leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.'

More than 2.2 million Soviet citizens are elected Deputies to the Soviets at all levels, i.e. plenipotentiary representatives of the people, exercising state power in their name and on their authority.

Sixteen million Soviet citizens are CPSU members.

More than 107 million industrial and office workers are members of the trade unions and through them daily influence the work of enterprises and institutes, and together with the management decide questions relating to production planning and development, the satisfaction of the material needs and the growing cultural requirements of the people and the organisation of their leisure.

The 35 million young men and women who are Komsomol members take most active part in the affairs of the Soviet state. Soviet youth is possessed of a high degree of political consciousness, and is ready to assume wide organisational functions, whether they relate to economy, culture, sports or child care.

More than 9 million industrial, collective-farm and office workers participate in the voluntary people's control bodies, which function at factories, on collective farms, in institutes, and in village Soviets on the basis of a special law and the People's Control Regulations. People's control bodies help local party organisations and the management to achieve the fulfil-

ment of state plans and targets and encourage the optimum utilisation of production reserves.

More than 30 million activists take part in various voluntary bodies, which are under the direct control of the Soviets—the street and housing committees, *druzhinniki* (voluntary groups of men and women who help the Soviet Militia in maintaining public order), comrades' courts, etc.

In attaining its objectives of improving socialist democracy, the party tries to exploit all links with the people and offer increasingly wide scope for popular initiative and experience.

The development and expansion of democracy in the USSR is determined by a number of economic and socio-political factors, among which the most important are:

- a) the powerful economic potential created by the selfless labour of the Soviet people and guaranteeing a continual rise in living standards and the solution of social problems according to the principles of scientific communism;
- b) the growing social homogeneity of society and the emergence of the Soviet people as a new historical community;
- c) the growing consciousness and political activity of Soviet people, the formation of the new man, who is fully developed, ready to take the initiative and aware of his responsibilities to society and the state;
- d) the further drawing together and exchange of experience, with the fraternal countries, which is particularly important at a time when many of them have just begun to build a developed socialist society.

Socialism provides a real economic basis for the development of democracy—social ownership of the means of production. All citizens of socialist society are equal owners of state property and, therefore, have equal owner's rights to participate in the management of production and in decision-making at a state level. Property relations provide all the material conditions, which further the democratic character of Soviet society. Social ownership excludes the exploitation of man by man.

Freedom from exploitation is the fundamental condition for the freedom of the individual. The only source of livelihood is personal labour, and the necessity for each member of society to work and the consequent right to receive reward for labour is a fundamental condition of equality.

But at the same time, the economic system of socialism not only gives rise to the conditions for the democratisation of the whole of society's life, but insistently requires it. The very successes of the economy and other aspects of society's life are directly dependent upon the development of democracy.

Socialism provides democracy with a real social basis—the unbreakable unity and friendly cooperation between the working class, the collective-farm peasantry and the Soviet intelligentsia. It gives democracy a completely new sense, extending it to the whole of society and making it truly national.

Our ideal of democracy is the participation of all citizens in running the state, i.e. social self-government in the widest sense of the word. The Soviet Union has not yet attained this ideal, but it is moving fast in this direction.

The Soviets of People's Deputies, which are the all-embracing organisations of the people and the embodiment of their unity, are the expression of social democracy in the state system of the USSR.

The Soviet representative system of organs of state power is an important, but not the only source of mass involvement in government. In socialist society the working people participate in the process at all stages and at all levels. The power and stability of the Soviet state apparatus comes from its close links with the people. Furthermore, it is composed of those who came entirely from the ranks of the working people themselves and who service the people, being their integral part. The leadership of the country at all levels is made up of the most talented people from among the industrial and collective-farm workers and the Soviet intelligentsia. Some 70 per cent of all Soviet ministers and chairmen of state committees began their careers as workers and peasants, and more than half of

the managers of the major industrial enterprises began as workers.

Thus, democracy in the Soviet Union which can be identified with the creative activity of the masses, is not only one of the important aims of our society, but a truly universal means of attaining these aims.

* * *

But true democracy cannot develop without peace. With the birth of the Soviet state there appeared on earth an insuperable peace force which offered a most humane alternative to mankind's centuries-old vicious circle of destructive wars. The foreign policy of the USSR during the 60 years of its existence has been aimed at ensuring international peace and security. In a report at a jubilee meeting to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Leonid Brezhnev stated: 'The Soviet Union is confidently pursuing a policy of peace. We actively and persistently call for the contest between socialism and capitalism to be decided not on the field of battle, not on munitions conveyors, but in the sphere of peaceful work. We want the frontiers dividing the two worlds to be crossed not by flight paths of missiles with nuclear warheads, but by threads of broad and diversified co-operation for the good of all mankind. By steadfastly pursuing this policy, we are giving practical expression to one of the main rallying cries of the October Revolution and carrying out one of Lenin's most important behests: "Peace to the peoples!"'¹⁶

The world's first state of victorious socialism, which carries on its banners the words 'peace', 'security' and 'cooperation' has enshrined these basic principles of its foreign policy in its constitution.

The Preamble of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR declares one of the main tasks of the Soviet state to be furthering 'the consolidation of peace and development of international

co-operation'. It further states that the Soviet people proclaim the aims and principles of the organisation of the socialist state of the whole people in the Constitution, 'taking into account the international position of the USSR as part of the world system of socialism, and conscious of their internationalist responsibility'. The content of this provision might briefly be described as 'responsibility for peace'.

Chapter 4 of the Fundamental Law of the USSR, which is entitled 'Foreign Policy', states that the USSR steadfastly pursues a Leninist policy of peace and stands for strengthening the security of nations and broad international cooperation.

The foreign policy of the USSR is aimed at ensuring international conditions favourable for building communism in the USSR, safeguarding the state interests of the Soviet Union, consolidating the positions of world socialism, supporting the struggle of peoples for national liberation and social progress, preventing wars of aggression, achieving universal and complete disarmament, and consistently implementing the principle of the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems (Article 28).

Each article in this Chapter is the result of the tremendous experience of the Soviet state in the international arena and affirms its success in the struggle for peace, detente and peaceful coexistence.

The preservation of peace is the most pressing task of the present day and a fundamental condition for the successful building of communist society in the USSR, the development of the socialist world system and the movement of peoples towards democracy and social progress. Peace policy is inherent in our state where all social forces unanimously support it. The economic might and political prestige of the Soviet Union together with the dedicated labour and bold ideals of the Soviet people are orientated towards peace. There are no social groups in our country with a stake in war or military build-up. This is one of the radical differences between our country and the bourgeois states, where there are influential circles with considerable

interest in stepping up the arms race and kindling military conflict. Today's detente and broader cooperation between states are explained primarily by the growing influence of Soviet foreign policy and the overall increase in the might of the world socialist community. The implementation of the Constitution of the USSR, the constitution of developed socialism, will undoubtedly exert a deep and long-lasting effect on world developments.

The provisions of the Constitution reflect those obligations which the Soviet Union undertook in accordance with international treaties and agreements. This relates primarily to such important international documents as the UN Charter and the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Article 29 of the Fundamental Law of the USSR sets out the basic principles on which the Soviet Union builds its relations with other states and which correspond to the ten points of the Helsinki Final Act.

The full text of this article is as follows: 'The USSR's relations with other states are based on observance of the following principles: sovereign equality; mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force; inviolability of frontiers; territorial integrity of states; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the equal rights of peoples and their right to decide their own destiny; co-operation among states; and fulfilment in good faith of obligations arising from the generally recognised principles and rules of international law, and from the international treaties signed by the USSR.'

These principles had always been a fundamental part of Soviet foreign policy, but now they are the constitutional principles of the Soviet state.

The main concern of Soviet foreign policy has always been disarmament which is now considered the most important problem facing the world. From its earliest days the Soviet state attached tremendous importance to this problem.

Article 28 of the Constitution, which declares that the USSR

is striving for the achievement of universal and complete disarmament clearly reflects one of the main directions of its peaceful foreign policy.

Also important in Article 28 is the declaration that 'in the USSR war propaganda is banned'. Since 1951 a Peace Law has existed in the Soviet Union which bans the propaganda of war. Raising this law to the level of an article of the Constitution is a highly symbolic act.

Article 69 is in the same vein. It declares the international duty of every Soviet citizen to 'promote friendship and co-operation with peoples of other lands and help maintain and strengthen world peace'.

There is no possibility of war being initiated by the Soviet Union. Article 121 of the Constitution declares that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (between sessions of the Supreme Soviet) shall proclaim a state of war in the event of an armed attack on the USSR, or when it is necessary to meet international treaty obligations relating to mutual defence against aggression.

Thus Soviet democracy guarantees the main human right—the right to life—and the foreign policy of the USSR is devoted to defending that right.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ROLE IN THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM

It is impossible to understand Soviet democracy without knowing something about the work of the Communist Party and its role in the political system of Soviet society.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the tried and tested militant vanguard of the Soviet people, which unites, on a voluntary basis, the more advanced, politically more conscious section of the working class, collective-farm peasantry and intelligentsia of the USSR. The CPSU holds the leading place in the socialist political system.

The leading and guiding role of the Communist Party in Soviet society is a constitutional principle of the Soviet state. Article 6 of the Constitution declares: 'The leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people.'

'The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the home and foreign policy of the USSR, directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism.'

'All party organisations shall function within the framework of the Constitution of the USSR.'

Founded by the great Lenin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has traversed a long and glorious path. From a comparatively small underground organisation it developed into

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a powerful united army of more than 16 million—the ruling party of the world's first socialist state.

The history of the Soviet country throughout the whole of the 20th century has been inseparably linked with the work of the Communist Party. Such transformations have been wrought under its leadership as have radically changed not only the appearance of the country, but also the course of world history. It was under party leadership that the Great October Socialist Revolution triumphed, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a powerful multi-national state—was formed, victory over fascism in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 achieved, and a developed socialist society built. Today the party exercises guidance over the whole work of building communism, giving it an organised, planned and scientifically grounded character.

The Communist Party formulates the fundamental political line of the state. All the achievements of our country are the result of the heroic labour of the Soviet people, of the tremendous organisational and educational work of the Communist Party, and of the consistent implementation of the Leninist general party line. The Communist Party points out the goals and shows the way to their achievement, ensuring that both state and public organisations adhere closely to its policy. Party guidelines lie at the basis of economic and cultural development plans.

Mass public organisations unite people according to their occupation, age or place of work. But the Communist Party is not linked to any departmental, professional or local interests. It is the highest form of the socio-political organisation of the working people and is the tried and tested vanguard of the whole of the Soviet people. In its origins, essence and historical role the Communist Party is the guiding force of each and all of the public organisations.

The CPSU's guiding role in society is the main condition for the genuinely democratic character of state power and the conformity of its policies with the interests and will of the people. Developed socialism in the Soviet Union has given rise to the socio-political and ideological unity of the Soviet people. But

the identity of radical interests among the Soviet people does not negate the variety of specific interests among different social, national, age and professional groups of the population. While expressing the general interests of the Soviet people, the Party coordinates the specific interests of its various groups and guarantees their satisfaction through a unified policy.

The Communist Party moulds the international, socialist world outlook of the working people and ensures the vitality of those new forms of mass participation as accord with the class, economic and cultural development of society.

Party leadership guarantees another, fundamentally important condition for the democratisation of state power—bringing its policy into line with the interests of social progress. In basing its work on Marxist-Leninist theory, the CPSU not only strives to maximum satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of the Soviet people, but continuously advances towards the goals of scientific communism.

The party is not a special force, which stands above society, the state or the people. It is rooted firmly among the people, and is its advanced detachment. The party organisations—and there are some 400,000 of them (there are 14 Central Committees of Union republics, 154 territorial and regional committees, 10 area committees, 4,243 city and district committees and over 390,000 Party cells)—function among practically all working collectives of the country. They are in a position to accumulate the experience, knowledge, interests and will of the people, express it in party policy, and guarantee direct and retroactive links between the state and the people, between the centre and the localities.

The CPSU, whose members come from the mass of the people, attracts the best representatives of the working class, collective-farm peasantry and intelligentsia.

According to the Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the 25th Party Congress (February 1976) there were 15,694,000 Communists. Of these, 41.6 per cent were workers, 13.9 per cent peasants, some 20 per cent representatives of the

technical intelligentsia and more than 24 per cent—writers, scientists, artists, educationalists, doctors and nurses, civil servants and the military. Over the last 30 years party membership has risen 200 hundred per cent.

It should be borne in mind that under socialism active involvement of workers, peasants and intellectuals in public activities through party membership is one of the main ways to attract them into running the affairs of society and the state. For millions of workers the party is a school of political education, where they learn the techniques of leadership which are the starting point for their work in various posts.

At a time when the party determines domestic and foreign policy and exercises guidance over all aspects of society, the development of socialist democracy is most favourably affected by the democratism of inner-party life and the way the party sets out the political line, takes crucial decisions and adopts forms, methods and style of party procedure guidance. It is hard therefore to overestimate the fact that the current practices within the CPSU allow it to approach most complex socio-political and economic problems with due regard for the interests of the working people and all the nationalities and ethnic groups of the USSR.

All major problems are discussed in the highest and lowest party organs not by one man alone, or by a narrow group, but at democratic party forums, such as party congresses, conferences and general meetings. All the other party organs are also run collectively, from the bureau and committee of a primary party cell to the Central Committee of the CPSU and its Political Bureau. All Communists are entitled to discuss freely political questions and such as relate to the practical works of the party.

Discussion of social problems by the party is further supplemented and extended by the detailed examination given to them by the Soviets of People's Deputies and frequently by nationwide discussion. The inner-party discussion which preceded the adoption by the CPSU of its Programme and the nationwide

discussion of the drafts of five-year plans and important laws are an expression of the democratic process, which allows the Communist Party and state organs to take cognisance of growing social requirements and the general and specific interests of different strata and groups. The Programme says: 'The Party considers it its duty always to consult the working people on the major questions of home and foreign policy, to make these questions an object of nation-wide discussion, and to attract more non-members to participating in all its work.'

An important element of Soviet democracy is that the work of the party and its organisation is completely open. The Soviet people are widely informed of the work of the party through the media and at meetings. They can not only pass their judgement on the work of the party, but also become themselves active participants in the implementation of party policy.

The CPSU ensures the sort of organisation for the internal life of the party as provides scope for initiative and the development of independence among Communists within the Leninist norms of party conduct.

On the eve of the 25th Party Congress, for example, more than 94 per cent of all Communists took part at annual general meetings in the local party cells and one in four of those present spoke during the debates. These meetings, conferences and congresses took place in an atmosphere of business-like discussion and showed the maturity and involvement of the Communists and the high level of their criticism and self-criticism. Communists appraised the work of the party elected bodies in implementing the decisions of the 24th Party Congress and set the tasks for the future. These meetings were widely reported by the media. Thus, the reports of the party committees to the party members virtually became reports to the working people. This reveals a most important principle—the party has no secrets from the people. On the contrary, it is deeply concerned with the fact that all the Soviet people be aware of its work and pass their judgement upon it.

The 25th Congress resolutely reaffirmed the policy for fur-

ther developing party democracy and increasing the active work of Communists. The party has consistently implemented a policy of electivity and accountability of the leading organs, maintained a spirit of collective leadership and decided all aspects of its work on a broad democratic basis. General meetings, conferences and congresses, in accordance with the Party Rules, have become a regular feature.

Care that public opinion on social problems should be given the fullest recognition has found its expression in the continued increase in the number of elected party activists, particularly from among workers and peasants. In the Central Committees of the Union republics, territorial and regional committees workers and peasants now account for approximately 30 per cent of their membership; in the area, city and district committees 40 per cent and in the local party committees and bureaux 50 per cent.

In their consistent observance of the principle of collective leadership and the other principles of party democracy, the CPSU presents an example of democratism at work.

That collective leadership is one of the most important principles in inner-party democracy is convincingly shown by the following data on the work of the central party organs for the period between the 24th and 25th Party Congresses.

Between 1971 and 1976 eleven Central Committee Plenums were held, at which the most important problems facing the party and the country were discussed.

The work of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee over this period was enormous. It held 215 sessions, at which matters relating to industry, agriculture, capital construction and improvement of management at all levels of the political and economic apparatus were discussed. Particular attention was given to measures for raising the living standards of the people, and systematic discussion was held over the problems of improving inner-party and ideological work. Foreign policy and defence were also high on the agenda.

The Secretariat of the Central Committee, which held 205

sessions, was permanently involved with the work of the party organisations, personnel problems and control over and verification of decisions.

The most important criterion for party democratism is its ability to analyse its own work critically, reveal its mistakes and shortcomings and take resolute steps towards their correction and avoidance in the future. The extensive development of the principle of criticism and self-criticism is a sign of the political health of a party organisation and a correct understanding of its duty towards the party and the people. As a rule, party committees carefully examine the critical comments made at party plenums and meetings, and during annual general meetings. Their implementation is then controlled by the appropriate bodies.

In stepping up the activity of the party organisations and of all their members, the party at the same time furthers the overall strengthening of its ranks. Party discipline does not simply amount to attending meetings and paying dues. The party wants to make every Communist an active militant, who participates in all its affairs and shares responsibility for its work.

The party was considerably strengthened and the activity and discipline of communists raised by the exchange of party cards, as decided by the 24th Party Congress. It was a thorough review of party forces and a careful check to see that each organisation and each communist were fulfilling their tasks and making their contribution to the common cause. The party organisations were very careful to make sure that there was no one in the party who was not worthy to be called a communist. During this period some 347,000 people were excluded from the ranks of the party, for failing to abide by the norms of party life, infringing discipline and losing contact with their party organisations.

As the initiative and activity of communists increases, so their mutual demands on one another are raised. Following the instructions of Lenin, the party organisations tolerate no

infringement of the Party Rules and Programme or those who are unworthy of being called communists.

The Communist Party unites, coordinates and exercises political leadership over the work of all state and public organisations. Party leadership is based entirely on persuasion, ideological influence and moral prestige. The party has no administrative rights in relation to other working people's organisations and party leadership has nothing in common with issuing orders or replacing any of such organisations.

The relationship between the Communist Party and the state organs and public organisations is democratic. The CPSU is the highest form of the political organisation of the working people and acts as the leader of the masses and the collective guide and organiser of society. The party does not issue orders or replace the state and public organs—it sets targets, persuades and guides. It formulates and offers to the people its policy, scientifically based decisions regarding the relevant social problems of the day, and organises their implementation.

The leading position of the party, its enormous ideological and political potential and its organisational structure create the necessary conditions for party influences as regards the content of the country's state and public activities. As the nucleus of all working collectives, the party uses its organisations and those communists who work in the state organs and public organisations to spread among them the ideas and principles of socialism in keeping with its general policy.

The fundamental line of the CPSU to separate the functions of the party from those of the other organs is also conducive to the fuller use of the latent possibilities of socialist democracy. The party solves this problem by raising the responsibility of each party, state and public organisation for the fulfilment of its obligations.

Enormous attention is given by the Communist Party to the Soviets of People's Deputies. In exercising guidance over the Soviets, the Party is fully aware that they are the highest organs of power in their territory and are called upon to solve

all problems within their competence. Their decisions are strictly binding upon all administrative personnel, and all enterprises, institutions and organisations within their territory.

The party is improving its guidance over the Soviets and raising the responsibility of the party committees for the work of the Soviets. This is not accidental, for it is on the work of the Soviets that the working people judge the policy of the Soviet state and the democratism of the Soviet social system.

The party makes the work of the Soviets more effective, develops and improves the democratic principles of the Soviet system and draws more and more sections of the population into running the affairs of society and the state.

The party attaches particular importance to training qualified personnel for the Soviets and to the strict observance of socialist legality and law and order. Party committees study the work of the Soviets, help them to eliminate shortcomings in their work and eradicate bureaucracy and disregard for the needs of the working people and raise the individual responsibility of the Soviets' staff.

Questions relating to the development of the Soviets are constantly discussed at party conferences and congresses. Hundreds of thousands of most loyal communists are assigned to the local Soviets. In emphasising the leading role of the party in the Soviet state, Lenin said: 'No important political or organisational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guidance of the Party's Central Committee.'⁸

This means that the Communist Party exercises political and organisational guidance over all the manifold work of the Soviet state.

Most important among the directives of the party are resolutions of the CPSU congresses and Central Committee plenums. These resolutions offer solutions to most urgent problems of communist construction. They sum up the experience of the people and formulate a programme of work for the Soviet state bodies for a given period. Many of the party resolutions

and directives later become laws, decrees and other legislative acts of the higher organs of state power in the USSR, Union republics and local organs.

The Communist Party pays considerable attention to the selection, education and promotion of personnel for the state apparatus and public organisations. Elections to all organs of state power are guided by the Communist Party. In standing, for example, for the elections to the regional Soviets of People's Deputies in a united bloc with non-party members, the Communist Party strives to nominate as candidates the best workers, whether communists or non-communists, who know the life, needs and requirements of the working people.

The Communist Party also guides the work of the Soviets by controlling all the state organs and verifying the implementation of party decisions by the organs of Soviet power. But party guidance over the Soviets does not mean that the party can be identified with state power. The guiding role of the party within the state and state power are quite separate notions.

It is interesting to note that during the nationwide discussion over the draft of the 1977 Constitution the Constitutional Commission received letters from a number of citizens who suggested handing state functions over to the party organs and giving the Political Bureau of the Central Committee legislative power. These suggestions were rejected as totally erroneous in that they distorted the role of the party in Soviet society and slurred over the significance and functions of the Soviets.

The Communist Party, having become the ruling party, firmly declared as early as 1919, at its 8th Congress that it would implement its decisions through the Soviets and within the framework of the Soviet Constitution, and that, though it would guide the work of the Soviets, it would not replace them and delimit the functions of the party and state organs. This Leninist principle was included in the Party Rules and has been reaffirmed at recent party congresses. On the suggestion

of the Constitutional Commission it was included in the final text of the 1977 Constitution.

Thus, the essence of party leadership consists in that it is not administrative, but political. It does not limit the independence or initiative of the representative organs. The Communist Party exercises its guidance over society and the state through working people's mass organisations which involve the whole of the Soviet people. These are town and village Soviets of People's Deputies with their numerous branches in the form of administrative, economic, cultural and other state organisations; the trade unions with their branches in the form of production, cultural, educational and other organisations; cooperatives of all types; youth organisations, and so on.

It is emphasised in the Party Rules that party organisations must not act in place of government, trade-union, co-operative or other public organisations of the working people; they must not allow either to mix the functions of party and other bodies or undue parallelism in work.

According to the Party Rules party groups are formed at congresses, conferences and meetings, and in the elective bodies of Soviets, trade unions, co-operatives and other mass organisations of the working people, having at least three party members. In particular, party groups are organised within the Soviets and their executive committees.

Included in the party groups of the Soviets and their executive committees are all their communists and deputies. It is the task of the party groups to promote party ideals and policy among non-party members, tighten party and state discipline, combat bureaucracy, and verify the implementation of party and Soviet resolutions.

As experience shows, the party groups of the Soviets are chiefly engaged in the allocation and training of personnel, and checking the fulfilment by communist deputies of their duties and control over the implementation of the resolutions of the leading organs and the decisions of the Soviets. Party groups are subordinate to the relevant party organs: for example, the

party group of the regional Soviet is subordinate to the regional party committee.

The Communist Party has drawn up the forms and methods for guiding state and public organisations with regard to the specific features of each of them. But what is most important is that the party explains and persuades people that its policy is correct. The state and public organisations which unite tens of millions of people in the USSR are convinced on the basis of their joint struggle to transform society that supporting the policy of the CPSU is a guarantee of the successful implementation of the plans for building communism. Therefore, they implement party policy as their own.

We have given a brief account of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its function in Soviet society and the Soviet state. This is indispensable for an understanding of Soviet democracy. But it is also important because the enemies of socialism resort to various ways and means in their attempt to belittle the significance of socialist democracy. Furthermore, the problem of the party and the state in the USSR, and under socialism in general, is usually the cause of most wild speculation on the part of bourgeois theoreticians and Sovietologists. It is this theme which again and again is made the subject of ideological struggle. Thus, the most zealous opponents of socialism accuse the Soviet Union of establishing the principle of party leadership over the state, which, in their opinion, proves the formal nature of socialist democracy, to which they oppose bourgeois democracy.

But in reality political parties in a modern imperialist state are integrated into the state apparatus in such a way that the dominant role is always played by those parties which defend private ownership and the system which depends on it. In socialist society paramount importance goes to the parties advocating social ownership and the social system which is based on it. But whereas communist theoreticians openly recognise the guiding role of the Marxist-Leninist party over the socialist state, bourgeois theoreticians prefer to hide the real situation

in an attempt to present the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, or rather its upper crust, the monopolists, as a model of the pure, 'supra-class' democracy.

But history has shown that there never has been and never will be any 'pure democracy'. While classes continue to exist, it is only possible to talk about one or another form of class democracy.

Another, no less ubiquitous argument is that of the one-party system. Here the ideological opponents of socialism make capital out of the fact that there is only one political party in the USSR, trying to show that Marxist-Leninists only stand for a one-party system, which makes socialism incompatible with democracy, for the latter, they allege, cannot exist without competition in the struggle for power.

These conclusions deliberately ignore the radical difference between class relations under capitalism and under socialism. Being one of the institutions of bourgeois democracy, the multi-party system does not alter the social content of capitalism. Though they alternate with each other as the ruling party, they do nothing to alter the exploitative nature of the capitalist system, but rather on the contrary, do everything they can to ensure that no working class party ever comes to power.

However, neither the founders of scientific communism, nor the documents of the international communist movement contain any assertion to the effect that socialism excludes the possibility of a multi-party system. Thus, in the Soviet Union after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution the Bolsheviks intended to offer some of the other political parties, which had been represented at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets (October 1917), participation in the new worker-peasant government and in building a new society. In fact, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), the supreme legislative body elected by the Congress, included 62 Bolsheviks, 29 left Socialist-Revolutionaries, 6 Menshevik-Internationalists, 3 Ukrainian Socialists and 1 Socialist-Revolutionary-Maximalist. The Bolsheviks considered it expedient to offer the

left Socialist-Revolutionaries ministerial posts in the new government—the Council of People's Commissars.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party declared at the time: 'We agreed, and *still agree*, to share power with the minority in the Soviets, provided that minority loyally and honestly undertake to submit to the majority and carry out the programmes, *approved by the whole* Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, for gradual, but firm and undeviating steps towards socialism.'⁹

However the other parties, including the left Socialist-Revolutionaries, not only refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks and not only refrained from giving their support to the actions of the revolutionary masses, but did everything in their power to impede the implementation of revolutionary measures. Later these parties were to go over to open counter-revolution.

It was not the Bolshevik party that 'destroyed' the petty bourgeois Menshevik and left Socialist-Revolutionary parties, as anti-communists would have it, but these parties themselves, by their open support of the overthrown exploiting classes, aroused the opposition of the masses and were resolutely rebuffed by them.

The one-party system was thus formed in the Soviet Union as a result of historical circumstances. But at the same time, a number of other socialist countries, according to the peculiarities of their social development, have several political parties of the working people. But it is the Marxist-Leninist parties that are the leading and guiding force there, while the other parties actively cooperate with them in the building of a new social system.

Their own experience and the lessons of history have shown the Soviet people that only on the basis of communist ideology, together with the communists and under the guidance of the Communist Party can genuine social progress and the satisfaction of the vital interests of the working people be achieved.

Once, before giving a lecture on the Soviet multinational state at a University in Belgium, I was handed a number of notes. Some of my listeners, knowing the subject of the lecture beforehand, were requesting that I answer one question in particular: whose interests in the final analysis were dominant in the Soviet federal state—the Union or its individual Republics. Obviously this is a most important question facing any federation. Perhaps, the Soviet answer will seem strange to the foreigner, for it is neither the one nor the other. It is not conflict, but harmony of interests which characterises the Soviet multinational federation. The essence of the Leninist nationalities policy consists in its combining the general interests of the whole union and those of each of its constituent republics. Implementing this policy is chiefly the function of the Soviet federation and Soviet national statehood. The harmonious combination of the statehood of the whole Soviet people and the statehood of the separate nations and nationalities is a characteristic feature of Soviet society, which first showed the world an example of a Marxist-Leninist solution to the complex nationalities question by uniting the peoples into one harmonious family.

The establishment of a completely new relationship between the individual nations and nationalities has become possible as a result of the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the liquidation of the exploitative system, the establishment of complete national equality, and the guarantee of the all-round economic, political and cultural progress of each nation and nationality.

In the history of mankind the relations between races and nations have composed its most tragic pages. Racial and national enmity has been for centuries—and still is in the capitalist world—poisoning relations between peoples, slowing down the development of culture and causing terrible distress. Once flourishing towns have been left in ruins, women, children and old people have perished in their millions and blood has flown in rivers.... For this reason the most progressive people of their time, from the great Spartacus who united the slaves of various nationalities under the banner of revolution to today's fighters against racial discrimination, have dreamed of equality for all races, nations and peoples. Yet not one social system had succeeded in realising this dream. The problem of racial relations was and remains one of the most complex in many countries. Take, for example, the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Belgium.

Only a few days after the storming of the Winter Palace, the world's first worker-and-peasant state adopted the famous Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia. Over the years of its existence the Soviet state has acquired unique experience in the development of a very large community of nations and nationalities, living in the Soviet Union. Each of these peoples has its own language, its own culture, its own traditions and customs. But at the same time there have formed a new historical community—the Soviet people. This means that it is the common features which do not depend on social and national differences that are becoming increasingly noticeable in the behaviour, character and outlook of Soviet people.

How did the Soviet Union manage to achieve this? How is the world's first multinational state, in which people of all nationalities are equal brothers, organised?

What I want to tell you is something known to every Soviet schoolchild, but at the same time it is so unusual and so new that many people abroad cannot understand it.

In the past there were many attempts to create large multinational empires from the empire of Alexander the Great (of

Macedon) to Hitler's Third Reich. But these world empires were doomed because the peoples who formed them, with their different languages, ways of life and cultures, were brought together forcibly and without equal rights. The great ruled the small, the mighty crushed the weak.

Only with the emergence of the socialist state, which combined national with social freedom, was mankind's age-old dream realised.

The Soviet state's experience is certainly unprecedented. In the situation inherited from the days of tsarism, where national strife was constantly being fanned, the creation of a union of socialist republics on the territory of the former Russian empire was a genuine triumph for Marxist theory and the Leninist policy of the Communist Party. It required the titanic revolutionary labour of Lenin and his comrades and the whole of the Communist Party.

Russia with its enormous territory had been faced with an acute national problem for many centuries. Nationalist prejudices had been encouraged by the tsarist colonial policies. The exploiting classes, who supported great-power chauvinism, did everything they could to foment national hatred and enmity and deliberately set one nation against another. The non-Russian peoples, who formed more than half the population of the country, had no rights, including the right to their national statehood. The administrative division of the Russian empire disregarded ethnographic characteristics. The territories inhabited by this or that people were as a rule divided and made part of different Russian provinces (*gubernia*). The colonial outlying regions of the Russian empire were astoundingly backward economically with one hundred per cent illiteracy and an extremely low level of culture. The multinational working people experienced vicious national and social oppression.

A concrete means for ridding themselves of this oppression and establishing new inter-nation relations was pointed out by the Communist Party. Lenin creatively developed the teaching of Marx and Engels and worked out the scientific principles for

the Communist Party's national policy. The old world of social and national oppression and national strife and isolation was replaced by the Communist Party and the working class with a new world of unity among the working peoples, where there is no place for the exploitation of man by man or one nation by another or any form of national privilege. The right of nations to self-determination and state sovereignty was at the basis of party policy on the national question.

The Great October Socialist Revolution provided the opportunity for the rapid solution of the age-old national problem on the basis of socialist reconstruction of society. It radically changed the socio-economic and political basis underlying the relations between the nations in tsarist Russia. Having overthrown the exploiting classes, it established the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is a state power incompatible with any form of social or national oppression.

The first major step of the Soviet government on the road to solving the national problem was the immediate establishment of legal equality between all nations, nationalities and ethnic groups inhabiting the country. Immediately after the victory of the October Revolution the Soviet state proclaimed national freedom, resolutely rejected the old system of national relations and began the consistent implementation of the democratic principles of its national policy. A clear demonstration of this policy was the enactment of the right of nations to self-determination. On the very day of the Socialist Revolution, 25 October (7 November), 1917, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in a Proclamation to the people, written by Lenin and entitled 'To Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!', declared that Soviet power 'will guarantee all the nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right to self-determination.'¹⁰

On 15 November 1917, the Council of People's Commissars adopted a Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia, which set out the Soviet state's basic policy on the national question. These included:

- equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia;
- their right to free self-determination up to and including secession and formation of an independent state;
- repeal of all national and religious privileges and limitations;
- free development of national minorities and ethnic groups.

During the civil war years, a close political, military, economic and diplomatic union was formed between four Soviet Republics—Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Transcaucasia. This union was secured in a number of treaties signed between them.

The peoples of these republics understood that to overcome the setbacks caused by the imperialist and civil wars, to build up the country, restore its productive forces and improve living conditions required joint efforts in developing the economy according to a single plan, which involved making rational use of natural resources and dividing labour between the various regions of the country. Furthermore, the threat of imperialist aggression had not abated.

Thus, the vital interests of the Soviet people, the tasks of socialist construction, and all objective and subjective conditions dictated the necessity to unite the Soviet republics into one state, which would be able of guaranteeing external security and solving the internal problems of economic and cultural development for the nations and nationalities on the basis of utilising the advantages of socialism.

In the concrete historical conditions which set in following the October Revolution, the most expedient form of such a state union was that advanced by Lenin and approved by the whole party. It was a voluntary and equal federal union of Soviet republics. The Communist Party believed that under Soviet power such a federation alone could guarantee the liberated nations the advantages of a mighty socialist state and at the same time ensure their national statehood.

Lenin's idea for the formation of a united state of Soviet

socialist republics was deeply internationalist. The working people of the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR and the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic supported it by expressing their desire to unite at the republican, *gubernia* (province), *uyezd* (district), *volost* (small rural district) congresses of Soviets as well as at mass meetings.

The final stage of this movement was marked by the republican congresses of Soviets in 1922, which secured legally the desire of the working people for the creation of a single union of Soviet republics.

On 30 December 1922, the First All-Union Congress of Soviets opened in Moscow with Lenin unanimously elected its honorary chairman. This marked the founding of the USSR as a union state.

The Congress discussed and approved the Declaration and Treaty on the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Congress decided to forward the Declaration and Treaty to the higher organs of state power in the Union republics for further examination. The latter took the final decision.

The Declaration noted that 'the very essence of Soviet power, which is internationalist in its class nature, encourages the working people of the Soviet republics to unite into one socialist family'. According to the Treaty the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR and the Transcaucasian SFSR united on a voluntary and equal basis into a single union state. The Treaty envisaged the creation of all-Union supreme organs of state power and organs of government and their terms of reference were outlined. In the final section of the Treaty a special paragraph emphasised that each Union republic maintained the right to secession from the USSR.

The Leninist principles of a voluntary state union of equal peoples underlay the first Constitution of the USSR drawn up by representatives from all the Union republics.

On 31 January 1924, the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets gave final approval to the Constitution of the USSR. It

gave legislative force to the Soviet state system, the sovereignty and independence of the constituent republics and their fraternal cooperation in economic, political and cultural life.

The 1924 Constitution gave broad rights to the Union republics and established their equal duties in relation to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Each Union republic, irrespective of its population, was given equal representation in the Soviet of Nationalities of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. All republics were accorded equal rights to the benefits of the Union and to its defence of their interests, rights and sovereignty and to equal participation in determining the policy of the Union. The Constitution outlined the powers of the union state, which extended to only such question as required centralised decision. These included foreign policy, defence, planning, and management of the most important sectors of the socialist economy. All other questions remained within the competence of the Union republics.

The formation of the USSR was triumph for the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and a victory for the Leninist national policy of the Communist Party.

In 1922, when the USSR was formed, there were 4 Union republics, 13 Autonomous republics and 6 Autonomous regions.

In the course of socialist construction favourable socio-economic conditions were gradually created for extending and improving the national structure of the USSR. In 1924 the Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Union republics were formed, and in 1929, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1936 the Kazakh and Kirghiz Autonomous Republics were made Union republics. In the same year the Azerbaijan and Georgian Soviet Republics, which had previously formed part of the Transcaucasian SFSR, became Union republics. The political and economic development of these nations and nationalities that had been reborn under Soviet power also found its expression in the formation of new Autonomous republics, Autonomous regions and national areas.

The 1936 Constitution of the USSR affirmed the victory of

socialism and all the changes that had taken place in the socio-economic life of the Soviet people during the period of national and state construction, and reasserted the firm fraternal friendship and cooperation between the peoples of the USSR.

After the adoption of the 1936 Constitution new and important changes took place in the territorial and state organisation of the USSR. Most important among these were the reunification of the Ukrainian people (1939-1945), the reunification of the Byelorussian people (1939), the re-establishment of Soviet power by the working people of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (1940). The working people of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian Soviet Republics expressed the will to join the USSR. And finally, as a result of the reunification of the Moldavian people the Moldavian ASSR became a union republic.

According to the Constitution of the USSR, 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral, federal, multinational state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics.

'The USSR embodies the state unity of the Soviet people and draws all its nations and nationalities together for the purpose of jointly building communism.' (Article 70).

Article 71 declares: 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics unites:

- the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic,
- the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic,
- the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic,
the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic,
the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.'

The Soviet multinational state also contains 20 Autonomous republics, 8 Autonomous regions and 10 national Autonomous areas.

From the very outset the Communist Party adopted a policy of promoting rapid economic, cultural, socio-political development of the national outlying districts. With fraternal help from the Russian people, their working class and the more developed regions of the country, these nations and nationalities traversed a path which in other conditions would have taken centuries. 'Such assistance,' Leonid Brezhnev said, 'the readiness to put in a great effort and even, putting it plainly, to make sacrifices so as to overcome the backwardness of the outlying national areas ... was the behest that Lenin required the proletariat of Russia to perform as a prime internationalist duty.'¹¹

State unity among the republics allowed a rational allocation of the productive forces in the interests of the whole Union and each of its constituent republics and effective use of the country's natural resources. This was made with due regard for the historically formed division of social labour. Material resources and efforts were concentrated on creating a single nation-wide economic complex.

Aid for the outlying national regions has been at the basis of economic policy. For many years the budgets of a number of Union republics were met chiefly by grants from the all-Union budget. For instance, in the 1924-25 fiscal year the Turkmen Republic's own revenues accounted for a little more than 10 per cent of its budget. During the Second Five-Year Plan period (1933-1937) two thirds of the capital investments in the Uzbek economy were met from all-Union resources.

Over all the five-year plan periods the Communist Party and the Soviet government have ensured more rapid economic growth rates in the national outlying districts, as compared with Central Russia.

Financial, material-technical, scientific and cultural aid to the formerly backward peoples in order to pull them up to the level of the more advanced nations became one of the laws of social development along the socialist lines.

Friendship between the peoples of the USSR developed and strengthened during the establishment of the socialist mode of production in all areas of the national economy, doing away with inequality between nations and inculcating the ideology of internationalism in the minds of a multinational people. It is apparent in all spheres of society's life—in the friendly cooperation between nations in the development of the economy and culture of the USSR as a whole and each republic individually. It is the guiding factor in exploring and developing the sources of raw materials, allocating material-technical and financial resources, setting up all-Union consumption funds, exchanging personnel, scientific discoveries and know-how and organising socialist emulation. Friendship between the peoples has led to their mutual cultural enrichment and to mutual assistance between scientific, technical, literary and cultural workers.

The Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) was a severe test for the friendship between nations and the stability of the USSR. The enemies of socialism counted on the USSR not being able to withstand the ordeals of the war years and that under the influence of centrifugal forces it would break up into separate isolated national entities and thus collapse. But they made a grave mistake. The peoples of the USSR fought their heroic fight side by side and selflessly worked for the defence of their socialist Motherland.

The historic victory of the Soviet people in the Patriotic War was one more demonstration to the world that free peoples, voluntarily united in a single multinational state of a new type, are an unconquerable force.

During the post-war years when the economy was rehabilitated and further developed and in the ensuing period of communist construction the friendship between the peoples of the USSR again and again demonstrated its strength.

In their united family of nations all the Soviet republics achieved tremendous successes in economic development. For example, from 1922 to 1972 industrial output in the Kazakh SSR rose 600 times, in the Tajik SSR more than 500 times, in the Kirghiz SSR more than 300 times, in the RSFSR, 300 times, in the Uzbek SSR almost 240 times, and in the Turkmen SSR, more than 130 times.

Such an unprecedented growth in the economy of the republics was achieved as a result of the purposeful utilisation of the resources of the whole country and the joint labour of all its nations and nationalities.

Striking changes similarly took place in the cultural development. Illiteracy has long been done away with. The level of education in many of the republics is now far higher than in some industrial capitalist countries. All the republics have seen a genuine flourishing of science, literature, art and all spheres of cultural life. The history of this development is full of examples of genuine fraternal friendship. After all, it is one thing to proclaim the equality of nations—as is done in many bourgeois constitutions—it is quite another to raise all the nationalities and ethnic groups to the level of the advanced nations. Many teachers, doctors and scientists were deputed from the central part of the country during the first years of Soviet power to the far-off villages of North and South.

The Far North is a special page in the history of our multinational state. The peoples of the North were literally saved from extinction. During the twenties it was the work of a special division of the Department of National Minorities in the People's Commissariat for Nationalities to preserve, guide and develop the smaller peoples of North Russia. It was important to protect and preserve each people, no matter how small. The first schools and community centres were set up to educate the hunters, trappers and reindeer-breeders and teach them to read and write. Today the Yakuts, Chukchi, Nentsi, Evenks, Koryaks, Nivkhi and many other ethnic groups in the North live a full life as equal citizens of their country.

Soviet power gave each citizen the right and the opportunity to study in his native language and acquire the riches both of his native culture and that of other peoples. More than 40 nations, which formerly had no written language, have been given during the Soviet period an alphabet and now possess developed literary languages. All the nations and nationalities of the USSR have voluntarily chosen Russian as the common language for inter-nation communication and cooperation. It has become a powerful means for uniting the Soviet peoples as well as acquainting them with the finest achievements of national and world culture. It is interesting to note that at the 1970 census thirteen million of the non-Russian population declared their native language to be Russian and 41.9 million said it was their second language. As many as 183.7 million people said Russian was their native or second language.

In all the republics there is a wide network of general schools, secondary specialised and higher educational institutions. Now for every 10,000 there are from 113 to 207 college students. In the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, where before the October Revolution there were no more than a few schools, there are today more than 26,000 secondary schools, 487 secondary specialised institutions and 110 higher educational institutions. In the Georgian SSR, for example, for every thousand working men there are 785 with higher or secondary specialised education.

The Communist Party has always stood for full equality between citizens, irrespective of race or nationality. This has been given legislative force in Article 36 of the new Constitution, which says: 'Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights.'

'Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native languages and the languages of other peoples of the USSR.'

'Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law.'

Soviet legislation is against any form of racial or national discrimination. Propaganda or agitation with the aim of inciting racial or national enmity, direct or indirect limitation of rights, the establishment of direct or indirect advantages on racial or national grounds are considered a crime in the USSR and are punishable by terms of from six months to three years imprisonment or from two to five years exile.

One thing which shows the genuinely equal rights of citizens of all nationalities is their participation in the organs of state power and government.

Take, for example, the highest body of state power, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. At the 1979 elections, its Soviet of the Union included deputies from 41 nationalities and the Soviet of Nationalities—57. These are not only people belonging to the largest nationalities of the Union and Autonomous republics, Autonomous regions and national areas. Among them there are representatives of nations and nationalities which do not have their own national-state entities in the USSR. These include Bulgars, Greeks, Koreans, Germans, Poles and Finns. Taking the Soviets as a whole, they include today deputies from more than 100 nationalities, i.e. from practically all the nationalities living in the Soviet Union. The social composition of the executive corps in any sector of the Soviet economy is just as multinational.

It is, therefore, clear just how false are the statements of the Sovietologists about the 'national oppression' or 'inequality' which allegedly exists in the Soviet Union. The Zionist propaganda is particularly active here, making loud noises about infringements of the rights of the Jews. But what on earth does this mean, when today thousands of Jews are deputies to the Soviets and occupy high government posts.

In the USSR a large number of books by Jewish writers are published both in Yiddish and in the languages of other peo-

ples of the USSR. Each month a Jewish literary journal is published, *Sovietish Heimland*, which prints novels, stories and poetry by over a hundred Jewish writers living all over the country. The works of the classic Jewish writer, Sholom Aleikhem have been published in millions. The Jewish People's Theatre puts on plays by Soviet writers, and Jewish drama and musical ensembles perform regularly.

The Soviet Constitution in granting each citizen a wide range of political rights and freedoms, guarantees equal opportunities for the citizens of all nationalities and gives them the rights to use their own language in state institutions and public organisations, have their children educated in it and to publish and broadcast in their native language.

The socio-political, economic and cultural changes in the lives of the peoples of the USSR have promoted the all-round development of all the Soviet socialist nations and drawn them closer together. This is shown, for example, by the number of mixed marriages in the USSR. According to the 1970 census, these amounted to some 8 million. If compared with the 1959 census, the figure shows that in the course of 11 years 5.5 million people of different nationalities have been joined in marriage.

The building of a developed socialist society and the drawing together and unification of the nations and nationalities of the USSR has led to the formation of an historically new community of people—the Soviet people. The Soviet people, as an historically new community, have been formed on the basis of social ownership of the means of production, unity of social, economic, political and cultural life, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the interests and Communist ideals of the working class. The Soviet people is a stable, free and voluntary association of people, who have stood the test of time and now possess a sound political, economic and ideological basis. It is a multinational community, embracing more than one hundred nations and nationalities, whose way of life and outlook, while maintaining their distinctive features, reflect their common features that

have grown and strengthened during the period of socialist and communist construction.

But this interrelationship cannot be fully understood in terms of economic and cultural relations alone. It is a complex interconnection between social and individual psychology.

The statehood of all Soviet nations and nationalities has common socialist essence and Soviet base. But national differences also find their reflection, and for this reason their statehood is a low-governed process and develops in national forms.

The national form of Soviet statehood finds its expression in the fact that it is built on the basis of different national groups who live together integrally on a given territory; that the main nationalities are widely represented in the organs of state power; that business is conducted in the national languages; and that the organs of state power and government in the national regions have certain specific national characteristics.

Of considerable importance in the development of the Soviet national state is the Leninist principle of democratic centralism. The essence of this principle as it applies to national-state development consists in ensuring firm unity, continuity and centralisation in determining the fundamental guidelines for the common tasks and basic aims of the whole multinational state. At the same time, only this principle ensures diversity, independence and initiative in the solution of local and specific national problems and also in determining the concrete ways and means for each national republic or region to reach these internationally common aims and goals.

As the functions of the Soviet multinational state develop and the volume of its work expands a two-fold process takes place. On the one hand, there is growing centralisation on questions of an all-Union or international significance, while on the other, there is increasing independence over other problems and day-to-day matters. Centralised sectoral management of the economy is combined with increased independence of the Union and Autonomous republics.

We began this section with the question of whose interests predominate in the Soviet federation—the Union's or the Republics'. The answer is contained in the new Constitution.

Article 73 says: 'The jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as represented by its highest bodies of state authority and administration, shall cover:

'1. the admission of new republics to the USSR; endorsement of the formation of new autonomous republics and autonomous regions within Union Republics;

'2. determination of the state boundaries of the USSR and approval of changes in the boundaries between Union Republics;

'3. establishment of the general principles for the organisation and functioning of republican and local bodies of state authority and administration;

'4. the ensurance of uniformity of legislative norms throughout the USSR and establishment of the fundamentals of the legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Union Republics;

'5. pursuance of a uniform social and economic policy; direction of the country's economy; determination of the main lines of scientific and technological progress and the general measures for rational exploitation and conservation of natural resources; the drafting and approval of state plans for the economic and social development of the USSR, and endorsement of reports on their fulfilment;

'6. the drafting and approval of the consolidated Budget of the USSR, and endorsement of the report on its execution; management of a single monetary and credit system; determination of the taxes and revenues forming the Budget of the USSR; and the formulation of prices and wages policy;

'7. direction of the sectors of the economy, and of enterprises and amalgamations under Union jurisdiction, and general direction of industries under Union-Republican jurisdiction;

'8. issues of war and peace, defence of the sovereignty of the USSR and safeguarding of its frontiers and territory, and organisation of defence; direction of the Armed Forces of the USSR;

'9. state security;

'10. representation of the USSR in international relations; the USSR's relations with other states and with international organisations; establishment of the general procedure for, and co-ordination of, the relations of Union Republics with other states and international organisations; foreign trade and other forms of external economic activity on the basis of state monopoly;

'11. control over observance of the Constitution of the USSR, and ensurance of conformity of the Constitutions of Union Republics to the Constitution of the USSR;

'12. and settlement of other matters of All-Union importance.'

At the same time Article 76 relates all other matters (without listing them separately) to the jurisdiction of the Union Republics. It says: 'Outside the spheres listed in Article 73 of the Constitution of the USSR, a Union Republic exercises independent authority on its territory.'

A Union republic is a sovereign Soviet socialist state that has united with other Soviet republics in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

According to Article 77 of the Constitution, 'Union Republics take part in decision-making in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Government of the USSR, and other bodies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. . . .

'A Union Republic shall ensure comprehensive economic and social development on its territory, facilitate exercise of the powers of the USSR on its territory, and implement the decisions of the highest bodies of state authority and administration of the USSR.

'In matters that come within its jurisdiction, a Union Republic shall co-ordinate and control the activity of enterprises, institutions, and organisations subordinate to the Union.'

The Leninist principle of combining all-Union interests with the interests of individual republics is embodied in the structure of the organs of state power and government of the USSR. All republics are represented on an equal basis in the higher bodies of the Soviet federation and participate in the formation and work of these organs. As was mentioned above, the highest representative organ in the country—the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—consists of two equal chambers: the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities.

The democratic principles of Soviet federalism are also reflected in the structure of the other all-Union bodies. Thus, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet—a collective body, which fulfils the functions of head of state—is made up of 15 Deputy Chairmen of the Presidium—one from each of the Union republics. The government of the USSR is composed of the chairmen of the Councils of Ministers of the Union republics, and the Supreme Court of the USSR includes the chairmen of the Supreme Courts of the Union republics. No other country in the world has a system like this.

The principle of combining Union and republican interests is similarly expressed in the system of Soviet legislation.

Thus, the establishment of fundamental laws by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the most important aspects of the state or the economy or on matters relating to social and cultural development implies adoption by the Union republics of their own laws and statutes, which particularise and amplify the all-Union statutes. The republics have their own civil, criminal and procedural codes covering such fields as labour, matrimony, health, land, etc. These laws are not contradictory. But in daily life considerable importance is attached to the observance of customs, and the laws of the republics take account of national specifics.

For example, in the majority of legal codes the marital age is fixed at 18, but in the Ukraine and Uzbekistan it is 18 years for men and 17 for women. In certain republics the laws on marriage permit the executive committees of the district and

town Soviets to lower the marital age by two years on special request from the interested parties.

Similarly interesting differences can be found in civil codes. The laws of the RSFSR on housing include among members of the family husband and wife, children, grandparents together with relatives and dependants, provided they live in a given family and have a common household. But the codes of the Uzbek and Moldavian Union Republics delineate the notion of family much more widely: it may include persons who simply live with the 'householder', maintaining with him a common household....

Now let's take a look at the criminal codes. In the Uzbek and Ukrainian Republics a threat to murder is a criminal offence which is not considered as such in the codes of the other republics. In the law of the Tajik Republic concerning responsibility for causing to commit suicide, one of the qualificatory indications is causing a woman to commit suicide through being made to live in feudal conditions. In this case it is quite clear how the specific features of the local way of life are reflected in legislation and how the new, humane ways which are part of the Soviet period struggle with the old traditions.

In order to indicate more fully the specifics of each republican legislation, let us consider the penalties inflicted for the production of poor-quality goods. In the RSFSR penalties are imposed for repeated or major infringements of this kind. But in Armenian, Kirghiz and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics penalties may be inflicted for a single instance.

In a number of republics (e.g. Uzbek, Estonian and Turkmen) legislation has been endorsed stipulating criminal responsibility for cruelty to animals and birds.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a united family. But at the same time each of its member Union republics possesses its own statehood and decides a wide range of problems related to state, economic, social and cultural development. Each republic enjoys territorial supremacy: no one has the right to alter its boundaries without the consent of the Supreme So-

viet of the republic. Each republic has its own Constitution and laws and its own supreme legislative and executive bodies—the republic's Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers respectively. The sovereign rights of each republic are protected by the USSR. Each Union republic is permanently represented at the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Briefly, the main functions of the republican permanent missions are: informing the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the all-Union ministries and departments on economic, social, cultural, financial and other matters of the republic; systematically notifying the republican Council of Ministers of decisions or measures being drafted by the government of the USSR and relating to the republic; participating in decision-making on matters brought up by the republican government for discussion by the government of the USSR and the Union ministries and departments; and widening economic and cultural links with other republics.

Genuine democratism and equality of the nations and nationalities of the USSR is expressed in the active participation of representatives of the various nationalities in running the state. At the 1975 elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous republics and the local Soviets of People's Deputies representatives from more than 100 nationalities were elected. The work of the Soviets is based on the principles of full national equality and proletarian internationalism.

The development of the Soviet federation and Soviet national statehood are determined today by the direct action and interaction of two common laws: the law of the development of nations, concerning their future growth and gradual drawing together and the law of the development of the Soviet state, the all-round expansion and improvement of socialist democracy.

The contemporary stage in the development of relations between the nationalities of the USSR, as was stressed in the CPSU Programme and the Documents and Resolutions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU, is the stage of the gradual drawing

together of the Soviet nations and nationalities and the achievement of their full unity.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a powerful political and state union of free and equal peoples, an indissoluble fraternal union of socialist nations and nationalities.

WHAT ARE THE SOVIETS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES?

There is no language in the world today which does not contain the political term 'Soviet'. Soviet power, the Soviet Union and the Soviet people are all connected with the same political phenomenon. The word, which comes from the Russian and means a 'council' or meeting of people to discuss and decide together, is now pronounced the same way by people all over the world.

But what are the 'Soviets', or as they are called today in the Soviet Union, the 'Soviets of People's Deputies'?

The Soviets of People's Deputies form the political basis of the state and social structure of the USSR. The Soviets were not decreed from above—they were formed throughout the country as a result of the revolutionary initiative of the masses. Born in the crucible of revolution as the organs of the working people's struggle for power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviets today have become the all-embracing organisations of the people, the embodiment of their unity and been transformed into a genuine school of the social activity of millions.

In the early days of the Soviet state Lenin declared: 'The Soviets are a higher form of democracy, and, what is more, the beginning of a *socialist* form of democracy.'¹²

Today, when a developed socialist society has been built in the USSR, the Soviets have been raised to a new level, embodying the flourishing of socialist democracy. The power of the Soviets consists in the fact that the people are not only the social base of political power, but the active participants in its exer-

cise. For the first time in history democracy under socialism corresponds to the exact sense of this word, because now it is indeed the power of the whole people.

Characterising the essence of political power after the victory of the socialist revolution, Lenin declared: '*...the people themselves... united in the Soviets, must run the state.*'¹³ This idea lies at the basis of the activity and organisation of the socialist political system. It is secured by the Constitution and legislative acts of the Soviets. Article 2 of the Constitution proclaims: 'All power in the USSR belongs to the people.'

'The people exercise state power through Soviets of People's Deputies, which constitute the political foundation of the USSR.'

'All other state bodies are under the control of, and accountable to, the Soviets of People's Deputies.'

The full power of the Soviets is expressed primarily in that they enjoy supremacy in the system of state bodies. The Soviets form the state apparatus and control its workings.

As distinct from bourgeois parliamentary institutions, the Soviets are, as Marx wrote with reference to the Paris Commune, a working corporation, fulfilling both legislative and executive functions.

Lenin considered this characteristic of the representative organs of power in the socialist state exceptionally important, saying that the deputies 'themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents'.¹⁴

The work of the Soviets today shows that this precept of Lenin has been successfully implemented.

The representative organs of state power—the Soviets at all levels from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to the local Soviets of People's Deputies—are the embodiment of state wisdom, together with the rich political experience of the masses. The party is concerned to increase their role in the life of Soviet society, perform their functions more fully, and consistently develop the institutions of socialist popular representation and improve the state apparatus. At the same time it creates the

necessary conditions for improving the work of the mass public organisations.

The Soviets of People's Deputies, elected on the basis of equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot, are an integral organisation of the people, and represent the whole population of the country. The Soviets include representatives of all nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union, which ensures that full account is taken of national and local specifics in decision-making on state, economic and cultural matters. Through the Soviets the people exercise their full state powers.

The consolidated system of Soviets, which has been established with regard for the federal character of the multinational state includes: the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (the USSR's parliament), the 15 Supreme Soviets of the Union republics, the 20 Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous republics, and more than 50,000 territorial, regional, area, district, urban, urban district, rural and settlement Soviets.

A ramified system of this sort makes it possible to compare various points of view and determine the necessary means to surmounting difficulties. It also helps in the study of the social development of both the smallest units of society and the country as a whole.

In conformity with the Constitution the Soviets are the foundation of socialist statehood.

In embodying the unity of political and economic guidance, the executive bodies of the Soviets are required to manage the whole range of socialist state property and dispose of the land, its minerals, water-reserves, forests, factories, mines, deposits, transport and communications and major state agricultural enterprises as well as the services and housing fund in towns and industrial centres. They possess the necessary means for actively influencing the mode of utilising those enterprises which are owned by the collective farms and cooperatives and other organisations of the working people.

During the very first days of the existence of the Soviet state Lenin said: 'The Soviets would have to become bodies regulat-

ing all production in Russia...'.¹⁵ In the course of the development of the socialist economy the thesis of Lenin became richer in content and now underlies the organisation of economic management in the USSR.

The Soviets approve economic plans and state and local budgets. They discuss reports on the execution of these important acts of the Soviet state and consider other matters related to the economy. In organising the fulfilment of plans the Soviets are continually seeking new reserves of the socialist economy as well as ensuring high rates of technical progress and the effective use of the latest scientific discoveries. Their basic interest is the rapid creation of the material and technical base of communism, increasing society's wealth and raising the material and cultural level of the people.

The political and economic work of the organs of power in the Soviet Union is closely linked with their guidance over cultural development. The Soviets run a network of schools, civic centres, houses of culture, theatres, cinemas and other educational and cultural institutions. The Soviet state runs a large number of higher and secondary educational institutions and research centres. The Soviets are responsible for planning the development of this network and determining the budget for its upkeep.

All the Soviets from top to bottom are required to engage in economic, organisational, educational and cultural work. Of course, each Soviet works within its competence. But it would be wrong to suggest that political and economic problems are chiefly the province of the Supreme Soviets, while cultural and routine problems come mostly within the field of activity of the local Soviets. Local Soviets in the USSR are not the same thing as town and city councils in a bourgeois state. They are organs of power of the socialist state, links in the chain of fully representative institutions.

Local Soviets are mass organs of state power which are closest to the population. There are 50,117 local Soviets, which include 6 territorial, 116 regional, 8 Soviets of Autonomous regions,

10 area, 2,970 district, 1,978 urban, 515 urban district, 41,049 rural and 3,542 settlement Soviets of People's Deputies.

Recent legislation has significantly broadened the rights and material resources of the local Soviets.

This has been expressed primarily in extending the sphere of their activity and the sectors of the economy that come within their jurisdiction. Thus, in recent years district and urban Soviets have been given additional responsibility for enterprises, institutions and organisations, which serve the population of the given district or town, as well as the state housing fund, belonging to the enterprises, institutions and organisations which are not subordinate to the local Soviets, and the community service units. At the same time the economic functions of the local Soviets are extended through raising their role in planning and coordinating the work of the enterprises, institutions and organisations in their territory irrespective of the ministry or department to which they are subordinated. The social functions of the local Soviets have also been extended, as has their work in inculcating respect for Soviet law and maintaining public order.

The local Soviets strictly safeguard the interests and legal rights of each citizen. Thus, the state organs pay careful attention to the letters and requests of citizens and take steps to eliminate shortcomings and put right causes for complaint.

Let us consider some examples.

The executive committee of the Baranovichi Town Soviet in Byelorussia on the basis of written and oral complaints took measures to improve the work of the town planning organisation, re-organised public catering service at the cotton mill and the work of the public transport depot. At the request of its citizens the Executive Committee of the Minsk City Soviet took measures to reduce noise. The Executive Committee of the Pokrashevsky Village Soviet (Slutsk District) attended to serious shortcomings in the catering at kindergartens and nurseries. Wherever the letters, suggestions and complaints of the workers are treated with proper attention, people enter their local So-

viets confident in the knowledge that they will receive help and support.

In recent years the character of letters sent to the local Soviets has noticeably changed. They contain fewer complaints and more suggestions and show how deeply concerned people are over economic development and the utilisation of reserves.

The work of the local organs of popular power is growing in all spheres of society's life—public health, education, social security, retail-trade and services.

In this context the experience of the Novopolotsk Town Soviet in social and cultural development is interesting. The town of Novopolotsk is some 20 years old. It has a population of 60,000-odd, most of whom are chemists. On the basis of plans presented by the enterprises and organisations and requests from the electorate an integral plan for the town's social and economic development was drawn up. This allows the town Soviet to coordinate and direct the efforts of all enterprises, institutions and organisations in dealing with social matters such as improving working conditions, services and leisure facilities.

From 1970 to 1975 more than 264,000 square metres of housing were built in Novopolotsk, together with a polyclinic, a health protection centre, three secondary schools, seven kindergartens and a number of community service centres, shops, cafés and a speed tram route. At the suggestion of the Soviet, town *voskresniki* (Sundays worked without pay for the benefit of society) were organised, with the townfolk having worked more than 65,000 man-days. They planted more than 60,000 trees and more than 400,000 shrubs and built many children's play and sports grounds.

The most numerous organs among the local Soviets are the village and settlement Soviets, whose membership exceeds 1,500,000 deputies. They work side by side with their electorate and share their concerns.

One of them is A. Yefremenkova, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Ostyorsk Settlement Soviet (Smolensk Region).

In 1976, she wrote to *Izvestia*, a newspaper published by the Soviets: 'Within the territory of our Soviet there are more than 100 voluntary public organisations. These include 57 street and 48 house committees involving more than 500 people. There are 100 *druzhinniki* (voluntary public order squads). There are two library-club councils, a Council of war and labour veterans, a comrades' court, a group of people's control, parents committees and several other organisations. In other words, every sixth elector takes part in the work of the Soviets through local voluntary groups.'

The Soviets fulfil a tremendous amount of organisational work in relation to social activities. The most important matters are decided at sessions of the local Soviets, which are called periodically. Deputies organise the implementation of measures decided upon at these sessions. In 1977, some 330,000 sessions of the local Soviets were held. They considered over 800,000 questions that were of vital importance to the population of the given village, settlement, district, town, region or territory. Nearly 25 per cent of the problems involved economic development and 20 per cent pertained to the social services. As many as 57,000 sessions discussed the electorate's mandates. More than 1,500,000 deputies (67.4 per cent of the total) spoke at those sessions.

Obviously all the work involved in the running of social and economic life cannot be carried out by the Soviets directly. A ramified network of state bodies is necessary, which in various ways take part in the organisation of economic, social and cultural, administrative and political development. All these bodies are directly or indirectly dependent on the Soviets and receive their powers from them. The Soviets are thus the only permanent basis of the state machinery from top to bottom and the basis of all other state bodies in the USSR.

The Soviets form commissions each of which works with a particular sector of economic, social and cultural, administrative and political development. Each member of the commission is responsible for his own field.

Legislation in recent years has broadened the powers of the standing commissions of the Soviets, and their supervisory functions, which is an important step towards increasing the activity of these mass bodies.

The Commissions of the Soviets—from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to the village Soviets—control the organs of state power, which include the government, ministries and departments, executive committees of the Soviets, and functionaries in the organisations, enterprises and institutions. In 1977, there were more than 328,000 commissions of this type with a total membership of 1,800,000 deputies and more than 2,500,000 activists.

Some idea of the volume of work handled by these commissions is given by the following data: in 1975, the standing commissions brought up over 443,000 questions for discussion by the Soviets, while at sessions of the Soviets more than 349,000 reports on a wide range of topics were made by the deputies.

In 1976 alone, the standing commissions of the Ukrainian local Soviets prepared more than 128,000 questions for discussion. These included many matters relevant to local life. The recommendations of the commissions do much to improve the varied activity of the Soviets and help them make the most effective use of their potential.

In 1975, the standing commissions of the local Soviets in Byelorussia prepared more than 50,000 questions for discussion by the Soviets and their executive committees and made more than 13,000 reports and co-reports at sessions of the Soviets.

The standing commissions of the Supreme Soviet and of the local Soviets in Byelorussia have required the help of a wide range of experts in different fields. In the republic's planning and budgeting for 1976 more than 43,000 people took an active part. The Sectoral Commissions of Byelorussia's Supreme Soviet set up ten preparatory commissions to hear reports from ministries, departments, and executive committees of the regional and urban Soviets. Main attention here was focussed on raising the

efficiency of production, increasing labour productivity and finding reserves for additional output.

In their work the standing commissions of the Soviets are aided by the executive committees of the Soviets, the activists and the electorate themselves.

In the USSR there is no division of powers, such as is characteristic of classic bourgeois parliamentarism. The Supreme Soviets in the USSR are sovereign representative bodies, which combine the functions of the legislature and the executive. They possess considerable potential to influence the practical work of the executive in which they themselves participate. The increasing convergence of both is a logical step in the development of the representative bodies of power in the USSR. This is one of the most important means for the development and improvement of Soviet democracy.

That the Soviets possess full state power is clearly shown by the fact that all the other state bodies are set up (elected, appointed or formed) by the Soviets of People's Deputies and that all these bodies are subordinate and responsible to them.

This is further confirmed by the fact that both the higher and local organs of state power form their own executive and administrative organs, i.e. the organs of government. The latter are subordinate to, and controlled by, the organs of state power which formed them. The organs formed by the Soviets function on the basis and in pursuance of the laws and decisions made by the Soviets and the higher state bodies.

According to Article 92 of the Constitution, 'Soviets of People's Deputies shall form people's control bodies combining state control with control by the working people at their enterprises, collective farms, institutions and organisations'.

The higher and local bodies of state power also elect the judiciary bodies—the Supreme Court of the USSR, the Supreme Courts of the Union and Autonomous republics, the territorial and regional courts, and the area courts, i.e. all the courts except the people's courts, which are elected directly by citizens. In exercising justice the courts are governed by the laws passed

by the supreme organs of state power—the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous republics.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR appoints a Procurator-General, who is in charge of all the bodies of the Procurator's Office, which supervise the precise observance of the laws adopted by the higher organs of state power.

The decisions taken by the Soviets are binding upon all, and are to be executed by all functionaries, state institutions and citizens. The Soviets of People's Deputies—from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to the village Soviets—have at their disposal the necessary means for enforcing their decisions. Obviously, the deputies who organise the people, resort primarily to persuasion and education, and often to personal example. But at the same time, the Soviets either themselves or by means of specially authorised bodies can, if the need arises, employ various means of administrative compulsion. They are also entitled whenever necessary to discharge workers in the organs they have formed, should they be unable to cope with the tasks entrusted to them or behave in a manner incompatible with their position. Furthermore, the commissions of the Soviets, in checking the work of individual institutions and organisations, may recommend that administrative measures be taken against some individuals. The Soviets and their bodies may decide whether or not evidence on the violation of law shall be forwarded to the procurator's office and the courts.

Thus, the Soviets possess full powers to control economic, social and cultural, administrative and political development. They are the foundation of the Soviet state system. It is also a characteristic feature of the Soviets that they are the organs of the popular self-government, i.e. widely representative institutions. The Soviets are elected directly by the people and consist of their best representatives. In their work they are guided by their elector's mandates, being subordinate to, and under the control of, the people. The People's Deputies are direct participants in the building of communism, they combine their duties

as deputies, i.e. practical participation in running the state, with their own jobs and professions.

But at the same time the Soviets are prestigious mass organisations, in so far as they unite the whole population, all the working people of town and village and all the nationalities. The Soviets are thus a special combination of state power, on the one hand, and public initiative, on the other.

The Soviets are organs of popular power. The continuous participation of the masses in their work, their open public nature, democratic centralism, collective leadership, equality of nationalities and socialist legality are the basic principles of their work and structure and characterise their democratic essence.

Article 94 of the 1977 Constitution declares: 'Soviets of People's Deputies shall function publicly on the basis of collective, free, constructive discussion and decision-making, of systematic reporting back to them and the people by their executive-administrative and other bodies, and of involving citizens on a broad scale in their work.'

In the Soviet Union everyone knows Lenin's demand that everything should be done in full view of the masses. From the first days of Soviet power this became one of its most important working principles, a guarantee of its effectiveness. But Soviet people are well informed not only of the legislative process, but also of all other aspects in the work of the organs of state power.

The Sessions of the Soviets take place openly. Many executive committees give advance notification of the questions to be discussed at their sessions. Working people can be present at the discussion of all matters. The decisions taken by the Soviets are reported by the media. Deputies and workers in the executive organs meet with their electorate and inform them of the work of the Soviets and explain the purpose of intended measures.

As distinct from the bourgeois political system, there can be no contradiction between local and higher organs of state power in the USSR. In the Soviet Union they represent an integral sys-

tem, built on the principle of democratic centralism, which is defined in Article 3 of the Constitution.

As is clear from the term, this principle combines two ideas—democracy and centralism. Democracy is expressed in the electiveness of all state bodies, their responsibility and accountability to the people, people's right to recall deputies and the accountability of the administrative organs to the organs of power. Centralism is shown in the guidance and control over the work of the lower bodies by the higher and in the unconditionally binding character of the decisions of the higher bodies over the lower.

Democratic centralism means that the higher Soviet not only controls the work of the lower Soviet, but guides it and is in turn responsible for its work. On the other hand, all Soviets are responsible to the people who elected them. The combination of an overall centralised guidance and functional local self-government ensures the organisation of the whole political, economic and cultural life on a common basis and the full accordance of local interests with the interests of the nation.

Democratic centralism combines local initiative and independence with the national interests. This unity between the centre and the localities is conditioned by the economic system and political organisation of Soviet society, the community of aims of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia. The principle of democratic centralism guarantees the necessary mutual subordination and division of labour between the Supreme Soviets and the local Soviets without infringing the independence of the latter in the decision of matters relating to their competence as well as the practical interaction between the Supreme and local Soviets in fulfilment of the individual tasks of socialist construction.

The Soviets are collective bodies. Their work and structure bear out the principle of collective leadership, which the very term 'Soviet' implies. They hold collective discussion of the most important matters on the basis of exchange of opinion, constructive, principled criticism and self-criticism, which insures

against one-sided, ill-considered decisions and guarantees that account is taken of the knowledge and experience of the masses.

The principle of collective leadership requires collective discussion and decision-making combined with personal responsibility for the work entrusted to them. This requirement relates primarily to the executive apparatus of the Soviets and is also important for the representative organs.

In bourgeois countries there is a widely held belief that local self-government should be apolitical and that the municipal councils ought to stand aside from politics, acting rather as an official apparatus for the provision of public services. The country that has taken this idea the furthest is possibly France, where the municipal and general councils are forbidden by law to express political opinions.

In the USSR the Soviets of People's Deputies can discuss any questions, whether of a political nature or not, and express their opinion on them.

General supervision of the work of the local Soviets is exercised not by the government, as is the case in the majority of the bourgeois countries, but by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, a collective body elected by parliament.

Thus, possession of full authority in its own area is probably the most concise characteristic of the local Soviets of People's Deputies.

An important characteristic of the Soviets is the fact that they are continually being supplemented by new manpower. More than half the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the current convocation, for instance, were elected for the first time. In 1975, 2,210,932 persons were elected to the local Soviets, 46.2 per cent of whom became deputies for the first time.

One of the characteristic features of Soviet democracy is the fact that deputies not only derive creative force from contact with the people, who have granted them their rights, but are continually under their control. The deputies, executive commit-

tees and their departments and directorates systematically report to their constituents.

In 1977, almost 100 per cent of the executive committees reported to the Soviets and to the electorate. Some 322,000 meetings were held all over the country, which were attended by more than 52,000,000 people. Almost all the deputies (99.4 per cent) reported directly to their electorate. The electorate supported the initiative of the deputies, criticised shortcomings, checked the fulfilment of mandates given at elections, and made concrete suggestions.

All that was valuable and constructive in these suggestions was reported to the executive committees of the Soviets, their departments and directorates. The requirements and vital problems of the population were thus duly accounted for by the state bodies and made up the basis of future plans and development.

The daily participation of the masses in state affairs is a rule of life in Soviet society. As regards the Soviets it takes on many forms. The electorate and activists participate in sessions of the Soviets, in sittings of the executive committees and the standing commissions and in the spot-check teams. They take active part in the discussion of the reports of the People's Deputies and the heads of the organs of state power.

The vigorous activities of the people's voluntary organisations are a graphic example of ever deeper democratism of Soviet society. There are now over 2,240,000 such organisations in the country, involving over 31,000,000 people. This enormous figure represents people who unstintingly give up their spare time and their talents to be of use to the state, society and the whole people. Their involvement in the work of the Soviets, standing commissions and executive committees is, as it were, a school of statehood and civic maturity. But at the same time it is a source of great moral satisfaction.

The widely representative make-up of the Soviets allows deputies and activists to participate in all the varied fields of socialist construction throughout the huge Soviet Union and

decide the most varied questions with regard to concrete conditions, diverse local experience and the initiative of millions.

When we speak of the participation of all citizens in state affairs, this does not mean that literally all must participate in government immediately at once and for ever. What is important is, first, that each link of the management apparatus should be under the control of the people, and, second, each citizen should have the concrete opportunity to participate in this or that form of management or control.

The executive committees of the Soviets and the deputies know how to involve people in their work. They try to make them feel that the Soviets need them and that their participation is important in everything it undertakes. An important role in this is played by making public the affairs of the Soviets. Reports of the executive committees and their departments and directorates to the electorate attract their interest in the work of the organs of state power and draw more and more sections of the population into it.

Many activists from the Soviets together with the deputies supervise the building of schools, clubs, stores and aid collective- and state-farm workers in harvesting and laying-in fodder and town and village development.

The local Soviets have many unrealised potentialities in exercising their rights and powers, and the activists help to implement these. Take, for instance, the participation of activists in the search for unused land resources.

Innumerable examples of citizen participation in running the country could be cited from any republic, any town or any district.

Take the ancient Russian town of Azov (Rostov Region). The activists of the Soviets work in numerous, ramified local volunteer groups. Although the work of such organisations is confined to the apartment house, the block, the street, the estate, and the working collective, it is nevertheless important state activity.

In Azov there are 38 street and 70 house committees. These

local organs include about a thousand workers, office workers, pensioners and housewives. For a quarter of a century now one of the street committees has been headed by Taisia Chestnova, a housewife. Back in the sixties she organised the town's first public repair team. For more than ten years pensioner Alexander Yarovoy has acted as chairman of a street committee. Another pensioner and party veteran, Pavel Ivanchenko, who was formerly chairman of the executive committee of the Azov Town Soviet and is now chairman of the town council of street committees has devoted much of his time and effort to the organisation of voluntary helpers of the Soviet.

These are but three of the activists in the town, whose names are too numerous to mention. What stands out is their enthusiastic concern for their native town of Azov. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan, 170,200 square metres of pavement were asphalted. Some 30,000 trees and shrubs were planted by the street committees in residential areas with the participation of the residents.

Street and house committees have an equally important role to play in educational work, particularly in cases of alcoholic abuse and misbehaviour. The local community organisations devote considerable time to educating youth.

The street and house committees also control town planning activities and the observance of sanitation rules.

In Azov meetings are frequently held with party and Soviet leaders and economic managers and lectures and discussions take place in the neighbourhoods. At one of these meetings the chief architect of Azov explained future plans for the development of the town. An interesting discussion took place with the town procurator on the role of the public in the fight against crime.

Thus, local initiative is an important support for the Soviets in their concern for the well-being of the population.

The desire of the activists to help the Soviet is of itself important. But desire alone is insufficient. What is necessary is knowledge, experience and skill.

In the USSR considerable experience has been accumulated

from the study of the activists, who are given the opportunity to acquire and extend their knowledge of economics and the law and learn management techniques. To help the activists in the Chelyabinsk Town Soviet, for example, the executive committee holds special seminars every quarter, where many questions are answered, consultations given and information on the fulfilment of the plan and lists of recommended literature made available.

New public societies have arisen recently. Among them a society for environmental conservation and protection of cultural monuments, a book-lovers society and a number of societies and associations of friendship with foreign countries.

The activity of the working people's associations is gradually widening. The trade unions, for instance, exercise increasing influence not only on industrial but also on agricultural production, on public education and on safeguarding the working people's rights. They are dealing with matters affecting all Soviet citizens (housing allocation, improvement of trade and social services and organisation of leisure). The cooperative societies, primarily the collective farms, decide a wide range of questions connected with the work of clubs, schools, refectories and old peoples' homes, thus going beyond the realm of purely productive activity. The collective farms are increasingly becoming schools of communism for millions of peasants.

The development of the initiative of the public organisations is closely linked with the effectiveness of their influence on production, every-day life, culture and education. Of great importance, for example, is the work of inventors, who are brought together in scientific and technical societies and in the All-Union Society of Inventors and Rationalisers. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan period millions of inventions and suggestions for rationalising production were introduced to produce a combined revenue of more than 19 billion rubles.

At the same time involving greater numbers of people in public activities, setting up new organisations and altering their spheres of activity are not an aim in themselves. These are a

means to ensure the conscious participation of Soviet people in communist construction, and thus a growth in material production and living standards, and a rise in the level of culture and education among the people. This is why the CPSU is so concerned that the work of millions of activists should be of maximum practical effect.

It is of particular importance to increase the role of the most massive public organs of state power, which are in close contact with the people, and expand the work of the grass-roots public organisations. After all, it is here that the foundations are laid for the voluntary participation of the working people in running the affairs of society, intolerance instilled towards shortcomings of any kind and criticism and self-criticism encouraged.

A very important role in the development of socialist democracy belongs to the bodies of workers and farmers at factories, collective farms, scientific and educational institutions and various types of economic and administrative institutions. These develop and strengthen such qualities as a communist attitude to work and socialist property, and conscious labour and social discipline, encourage friendship and mutual help and develop feelings of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism. It is these work units which give rise to such inseparable features of the Soviet way of life as a high degree of responsibility among each member of the collective for the work of the collective as a whole and similar concern on the part of the collective for each of its members.

'The work collective, and the work of its Party, trade-union and Young Communist League organisations reflect the whole life of our society—economic, political and spiritual. Indeed, this is the primary cell of the whole of our organism, both economic and political,'¹⁸ Leonid Brezhnev said at the Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on 4 October 1977.

It is therefore quite natural that the new Fundamental Law of the USSR should devote a special article to this primary unit. The full text is as follows:

'Work collectives take part in discussing and deciding state and public affairs, in planning production and social development, in training and placing personnel, and in discussing and deciding matters pertaining to the management of enterprises and institutions, the improvement of working and living conditions, and the use of funds allocated both for developing production and for social and cultural purposes and financial incentives.

'Work collectives promote socialist emulation, the spread of progressive methods of work, and the strengthening of production discipline, educate their members in the spirit of communist morality, and strive to enhance their political consciousness and raise their cultural level and skills and qualifications.' (Article 8).

In the USSR there is a successfully functioning system of working people's participation in management. Tremendous influence on the life of work collectives is played by the standing production committees, which number in excess of 130,000. The elected staff of these committees comes to over five million, and tens of millions of people are involved in their work. Between 1970 and 1975 the standing production committees approved more than 6,500,000 suggestions.

The foreign reader, unacquainted with Soviet life, might well ask what sort of disputes and differences might occur with the management of an enterprise if the interests of the administration, trade unions and workers are identical. Of course, the interests of the socialist state and the public organisations, which include the trade unions, are in the final analysis identical. This does not, however, mean that there are no differences of opinion on specific questions of production, labour organisation or the social services. Such differences naturally exist, and furthermore, they are in many cases useful, for they help produce an objective evaluation of a situation, reveal deficiencies and the ways to overcoming them and encourage principled criticism and self-criticism. It is for this reason that the Party, as was noted in the Report of the Central Committee

of the CPSU to the 25th Party Congress, seeks to promote the initiative of the state organs and public organisations.

During the course of communist construction the relationship between the social and state organisations is improved and greater harmony in their work attained. But the essential condition for this is a clear division of functions between the party, trade-union and other organisations. This also refers to the relationship between the public organisations and the Soviet state.

Cooperation between the state and public organisations allows in some cases certain of the functions performed by the former to be passed over to the latter. Such, for example, are the functions of the trade unions involving the supervision over social insurance, the network of sanatoria and rest-homes and controlling the enforcement of labour legislation. There are a considerable number of matters that the state organs are only entitled to decide with the agreement or participation of the appropriate public organisations.

One aspect of citizen participation in government takes the form of letters and suggestions to party, state and public bodies. For example, during the 25th CPSU Congress and the preceding preparatory period the Central Committee received more than 600,000 letters and telegrams, and many letters were sent to the local party organs.

The 25th Congress paid great attention to these letters, showing their socio-political importance as one of the many links with the masses.

In recent years the content and character of letters sent to the central and local organisations have undergone significant changes. There has been an increase in the number of letters raising matters of party and state significance and containing enthusiastic responses on the most important party and state measures in domestic and foreign policy together with concrete, constructive suggestions, and advice for raising the effectiveness of social production, improving the quality of work and eliminating deficiencies.

Many of the suggestions made were used while drafting materials for the 25th Congress and were reflected in its resolutions. Some more important advice and ideas were considered by the Central Committee and taken into consideration in drawing up Party resolutions, verifying their fulfilment and in the practical work of the leading bodies.

In a special resolution adopted in May 1976 by the Central Committee of the CPSU On Further Improvement of Work with Working People's Correspondence in the Light of the Decisions of the 25th CPSU Congress a number of concrete measures were drawn up in this direction. It was made the rule that party, Soviet and economic management bodies, managers and directors of institutions, organisations, collective and state farms were obliged to consider working people's letters within not more than one month after receipt, and inform correspondents of the results of this examination of their suggestions and requests. The national and local press, radio and television were instructed to regularly feature working people's letters and keep the public informed about measures adopted in response to them. The press must make wider use of the editorial post-bag in preparing material for publication on topical themes, give a fuller account of the staff work with citizens' correspondence and statements and make known publicly evidence of bureaucracy and red-tape in handling the complaints.

This has been a brief account of the various ways in which Soviet citizens participate in running society and the state. Concrete statistics have been adduced and many public organisations referred to, some of which will no doubt be found difficult to remember. Perhaps this list has seemed rather long, but the language of facts and statistics is more convincing than that of words alone in showing the comprehensiveness of Soviet democracy and the massive forces it musters for active participation in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life. A French king once pronounced the famous words, 'L'état—c'est moi!'; the Soviet people today can say with full justification 'L'état—c'est nous!'

Every adult citizen in the USSR takes part in the work of one public organisation or another. All these organisations, like hundreds of small streams, flow into the main current of voluntary work which is carried out throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union, the mighty river of genuine democracy.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is constantly concerned that this mass participation in government should continually increase. This is particularly shown in the new Constitution which includes a special Article (48) on the rights of citizens to participate in government. It says: 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to take part in the management and administration of state and public affairs and in the discussion and adoption of laws and measures of All-Union and local significance.'

'This right is ensured by the opportunity to vote and to be elected to Soviets of People's Deputies and other elective state bodies, to take part in nationwide discussions and referendums, in people's control, in the work of state bodies, public organisations, and local community groups, and in meetings at places of work or residence.'

Citizens' participation in all forms of management in its turn helps the Soviets of People's Deputies to more fully implement their diverse functions in guiding the life of a state, in which every man feels himself a citizen in the full sense of the word, who is concerned about the affairs of society and is ready to take his share of responsibility.

THE ELECTION AND RECALL OF DEPUTIES

All Soviets of People's Deputies are elected by direct suffrage. The executive organs of the Soviets, however, are elected by the appropriate Soviets. Thus, for example, the government is elected by the Supreme Soviet and accountable to it.

The level of democracy in the Soviet socialist state is largely determined by the growing participation of the peoples of the USSR in the work of the representative institutions. The election of deputies to the Soviets at all levels is a means for drawing broad sections of the people into political activity. During the pre-election campaign the Soviet people review the work of the state organs during their term of office and evaluate the successes and shortcomings of the Soviets and individual deputies. The electors make their suggestions and give the candidates their mandates.

Elections take place according to the electoral system established by the Constitution of the USSR.

Elections to all Soviets of People's Deputies—from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to the rural and settlement Soviets—are conducted on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

But, it may be objected, these principles, or principles very much like them are proclaimed in the constitutions of many other countries. What, therefore, are the distinguishing features of such principles in the specific conditions of Soviet democracy?

Universal suffrage in the USSR is guaranteed by the fact that the right to vote is accorded to all responsible citizens who

have reached the age of 18. Thus the voting age in the USSR is three years lower than in many of the capitalist countries, although, it is true, that in recent years a number of them have also lowered their voting age.

All citizens participate equally in the elections irrespective of whether they reside permanently in a given place or are in transit. There is no residence qualification under Soviet electoral law, as is the case, for instance, in the United States or France.

The electoral rights of Soviet citizens are restricted by no qualifications of any kind. No state body or court can deprive a citizen of the USSR of his electoral rights for any reason whatever.

Voting takes place from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., which allows every citizen to fulfil his civic duty at a time most convenient for him.

Polling stations are so arranged that the elector does not have to go far to cast his vote. Therefore in small, but widely scattered Soviet villages and settlements, separate polling stations are set up. They are also formed at the nomadic encampments of the shepherds and cowherds in the Central Asian and Caucasian republics and the reindeer-breeders in the Far North, at wintering stations, at airports and on long-distance trains and ships that are at sea on the day of the elections. Special polling stations are also set up at hospitals, sanatoria and invalid homes.

Soviet electoral law has established the simplest and most democratic system for compiling an electoral roll. Every citizen who enjoys electoral rights is guaranteed a place on this roll, being registered at his permanent or temporary place of residence, and has the opportunity to check whether the information included about him on the electoral roll is correct and to make any changes necessary. Electoral rolls are reviewed and checked on the eve of the election to ensure the fullest possible coverage of all electors.

Universal suffrage is guaranteed in the Soviet Union in deed

and Soviet citizens actively take advantage of this right. Election absenteeism, which is a wide-spread phenomenon in the capitalist countries, is unknown in Soviet society. In 1926, for instance, 50.8 per cent of the electorate took part in the elections to the rural and city Soviets. By 1929 this figure rose to 63.5 per cent; in 1931, to 72.1 per cent; in 1934, to 85 per cent; and in 1937, to 96 per cent. From 1939 onwards more than 99 per cent of the electorate have participated in all elections to the Soviets. Thus, today essentially the whole adult population of the country takes part in electing the organs of state power.

The second principle of the Soviet electoral system is *equal suffrage*. This is guaranteed by the fact that every citizen of the USSR has one vote and all citizens participate equally in the elections. An industrial worker, a collective farmer, an intellectual, a minister, a filing clerk, a director, a housewife, an Army Marshal and a private can all equally elect and be elected to the Soviets. Equal suffrage in the USSR is also guaranteed by equal representation. The elections, for example, to the Soviet of the Union—one of the chambers of the Soviet parliament—are conducted on the basis of equal constituencies. This principle is fixed in the Constitution and the government cannot change it by any kind of gerrymandering of the sort which takes place in many countries, whereby constituencies are rearranged in the interests of different parties or candidates. Whereas in France, for example, a deputy from, say, Lozère or Ariège has a constituency of a different size from a deputy from Paris, in the USSR a deputy from Moscow and a deputy from Vologda represent an equal number of electors. This means that the vote of an elector in Moscow has the same weight as the vote of an elector in Vologda or in any other town.

In the interests of the voters the Soviet Constitution has established *direct elections* to all Soviets, including both chambers of the Supreme Soviet. This is the third most important principle of Soviet electoral law. In voting for a candidate

directly, the Soviet voter can decide for himself whom he is ready to entrust with his own and the state's interests in the organs of power.

Elections are controlled by representatives of the Soviet public, members of electoral commissions, which are set up in each constituency. These commissions are formed from representatives of party, trade-union, Komsomol and other public organisations, chosen at meetings of industrial, agricultural and office workers and members of the armed forces. Millions of citizens take active part in the election campaign. Thus, in the 1975 election campaign some 9,261,000 citizens took part in the 2,260,000 electoral commissions; 61.5 per cent of these were industrial and agricultural workers engaged directly in production. In the Supreme and local Soviets election campaign in 1979 over 1,661,406 working people's representatives were appointed members of the election commissions. Many more people are actively engaged in helping the Soviet and public organisations prepare for the elections and canvassing among the population.

The election campaign in the USSR is guided by the Communist Party, which at the elections forms a bloc (coalition) with non-party members. This bloc arose on the basis of a firm union between the workers and peasants and on the moral and political unity of Soviet society.

As distinct from many other countries it is not the custom in the Soviet Union for candidates to nominate their own candidature.

According to the 1977 Constitution, 'The following shall have the right to nominate candidates: branches and organisations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, trade unions, and the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League; co-operatives and other public organisations; work collectives, and meetings of servicemen in their military units.

'Citizens of the USSR and public organisations are guaranteed the right to free and all-round discussion of the political and personal qualities and competence of candidates, and the

right to campaign for them at meetings, in the press, and on television and radio.' (Article 100).

The state provides the people and their organisations freely with all the resources necessary to conduct their campaign. The practice, which is widespread in the bourgeois world of permitting one candidate to make use of the services of the television and other mass media and refusing the same service to another, can have no place in the Soviet Union.

The question is frequently asked by those who are unacquainted with the Soviet electoral system why at elections in the USSR there is only one candidate. To answer this question it is necessary to say something first about the actual process of nominating candidates.

Soviet law does not impose any limitations on the number of candidates in a constituency or throughout the country. Various public organisations and citizens' meetings nominate one or a number of candidates for each deputy's post.

Both electoral law and the whole experience of conducting elections in the USSR guarantee the free and critical discussion at these meetings of any number of candidates and a majority vote decides which one is to be nominated to represent this or that collective.

Candidates at meetings can be put forward by local public organisations as well as by individual citizens. The nominees are discussed in full at the meeting. Should a candidate put forward at the meeting not meet with the required support, other candidates are suggested. Candidates that are nominated at such meetings are extensively discussed by the electors in those constituencies where they are to stand for election.

All-round discussion and the nomination of best qualified candidates is the basic principle of the nominating procedure.

The party, Komsomol, trade-union and other public organisations take part in elections not as rivals but in a united bloc. After the nomination is over, constituency conference of representatives of the general nomination meetings are held. Here all the public organisations of a given constituency nominate a

single candidate. Working people's representatives to this constituency conference are nominated both at the pre-election meetings in the organisations, where candidates have been nominated, and at meetings where general discussion takes place on the nominated candidates. Thus, all candidates and the organisations which have nominated them are represented at the constituency conference, which selects the most suitable nominee and recommends him for registration as an official candidate.

It is obvious that given the moral and political unity of society all candidates hold a common electoral platform—that of a coalition of communists and non-party members—which is in the common interests of society. In the discussion of candidates at the pre-election conferences it is not a matter of deciding which candidate's platform is the most acceptable, but determining which candidate has the best personal and professional qualifications for the job. This system allows the careful selection of candidates with regard for the opinion of the electorate and is the reason why there is unanimity in voting at the elections.

The above goes some way to explaining how the election campaign actually proceeds. It should be noted that in the 1975 elections to the local Soviets, for example, a significantly large number of candidates were rejected by the electors after registration.

It is often maintained abroad that when only one candidate stands for election, he will automatically be elected, and therefore there is no such thing as an election in the Soviet Union. Is this in fact the case? Soviet democracy does imply the spirit of solidarity among the people which makes it hardly surprising that the Soviet people are unanimous in expressing their political views. However, nominating a candidate does not mean that he will automatically be elected. Thus, at the June 1975 elections 62 candidates to the village Soviets were not elected; 2, to the settlement Soviets; 1 candidate, to the district Soviets.

A distinctive characteristic of the Soviet electoral system is

the right of recall. If the electorate consider that a deputy has not justified his election they may at any time recall him and elect another.

The right of recall was given concrete expression and practical guarantee by the Law on the Recall of a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet, passed on 30 October 1959 and corresponding laws in the Union republics. According to the preamble to this law, 'The right of recall, as one of the fundamental principles of socialist democracy and established by the Soviet state as a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution, is an expression of the sovereignty of the working people and guarantees the responsibility of a deputy to the electorate.'

The reasons for recall are, firstly, non-fulfilment of obligations resulting in failure to justify the confidence of the electorate and, secondly, an act considered to be unworthy of the high position of deputy.

The right to raise the question of recall is granted to a wide range of public organisations and general meetings of working people, those in fact that have the right to nominate candidates at the time of the elections.

The decision as to recall is made by the electorate themselves at meetings held within the appropriate constituency and called by public organisations at enterprises, institutes, collective farms, military units or place of residence. The decision is taken by an open vote after discussion in which each public organisation and each citizen has the right to unimpeded action in support of or against the decision to recall. A deputy is considered to be recalled if more than 50 per cent of the electorate in his constituency voted against him. The Soviet then sets the date for new elections.

Open discussion of the question of recall at meetings of public organisations and at general meetings of work collectives at enterprises, institutes and organisations is not only a form of public condemnation of whoever has committed acts unworthy of his station but also is of considerable preventive as well as socio-instructive significance.

The established procedure for voting on recall and for determining the results of the voting in the appropriate constituencies is controlled by constituency commissions made up of representatives of public organisations and general meetings of the electorate.

Thus, from raising the question of recall to establishing the results of the voting, discussion and decision of these questions takes place with the direct participation of the electorate, work collectives and public organisations.

For the foreign reader to have a better idea of how this all works out in practice, let us take a few examples.

In 1974 the electorate of the third constituency of the village of Yuryevskoye (Ivanovo Region) recalled deputy Alexei Gorokhov from the local Soviet and in his place elected Zoya Sizova, head of the local medical centre.

What was the story behind this?

At the pre-election meetings (both for the Supreme and the local Soviets) the electorate give the candidates their mandates, which are in the form of suggestions made by the majority of the residents in a given constituency. They may involve such things as building hospitals, schools, town and village planning, etc. The Soviets examine these mandates at their first sessions and include them within the plan of their work.

Like many other candidates Gorokhov too received his mandate. Among other tasks, he was requested to see to it that the village Soviet build a new shop and ensure that all houses were supplied with gas. This mandate was not carried out. Furthermore Gorokhov did not observe reception hours, neither did he report to the electorate, as he was supposed to at least twice a year. Despite frequent reminders from his constituents, nothing changed. The constituents, therefore, decided to have him recalled and deprived of his mandate.

As was noted above, the right to raise the question of recall is given by law to public organisations and general meetings of the electorate. In the case of Alexei Gorokhov this right was exercised by the workers of the state farm, who made up

the majority of his constituency. They held a general meeting and application for the recall of the deputy was forwarded to the executive committee of the Yuryevskoye Soviet.

Here is another example. On 24 May 1974, the newspaper *Bakinsky Rabochy* (Baku Worker) reported the recall of deputy Bairamov.

A. Bairamov was chairman of the Executive Committee of the Nakhichevan City Soviet of Working People's Deputies. Despite the massive housing programme launched in recent years in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, there are still shortages in living space and hence a waiting list for accommodation. This was exploited by Bairamov. First, he allowed work on town planning to be neglected, then avoiding responsibility for guiding the current work of the executive committee departments, ended up by infringing the established procedure for housing allocation. During his term of office the number of persons who received living space out of turn trebled. Flats were received by those whose turn was a long way off, and even by those who were not on the list at all. Serious infringements had also been allowed over flat exchanges. Bairamov was issued a warning, but refused to draw the necessary conclusions. Therefore at a session of the Nakhichevan City Soviet Bairamov was released from his duties as chairman of the executive committee and lost his place on the city Soviet.

These are two concrete examples. Deputy Gorokhov did not justify the confidence of his constituents. Deputy Bairamov committed acts unworthy of his high position. They both were recalled.

How frequent are incidents of recall among Soviet deputies?

From 1965 to 1973, more than 4,000 deputies were recalled from the local Soviets. From 1959, when the Law on the recall of a deputy of the Supreme Soviet was passed, to 1976 twelve deputies of the Supreme Soviet were recalled. The right of recall, therefore, is no mere paper enactment, although it is not applied frequently—after all the overwhelming majority of Soviet deputies justify the confidence placed in them.

Every citizen of the Soviet Union refers to his socialist Fatherland as the Land of Soviets. This is quite understandable. The Soviets of People's Deputies form the political basis of our state and embody its democratic character to the fullest degree.

The most important person in the Soviets is the deputy. As distinct from other countries, in the Soviet Union the title 'deputy' is not only given to a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, but also to the members of all the other 50,000 Soviets.

In all there are over 2.2 million deputies, 1,500 of whom are deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (in 1979), 6,104 are deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics (1975), 3,155 are deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous republics (1975) and 2,210,932 are deputies of the local Soviets (1975). Among the deputies of the local Soviets there are 29,651 deputies of the territorial, regional and area Soviets, 235,246 deputies of the district Soviets, 265,610 deputies of the town Soviets, 119,846 deputies of the urban district Soviets, 1,349,120 deputies of the village Soviets and 211,459 deputies of the settlement Soviets.

All these deputies are representatives of the working class, collective-farm peasantry, and the intelligentsia of all the nations and nationalities of the Soviet country. They are people of all generations and professions and include both communists and non-communists, men and women. The majority of them work in factories, in the field, and in scientific, educational or other institutes. Their duties as deputies are fulfilled in the time when they are free from their normal work.

In 1975 the deputies to the Soviets included 899,733 (40.5 per cent) workers, and 603,742 (27.2 per cent) collective farmers, 6.6 per cent executives or specialists at enterprises, 11 per cent workers in science, culture, the arts, education and the health services, 7.5 per cent workers in the Soviet state apparatus, 3.2 per cent workers in the party, trade-union, Komsomol and other public organisations and 4 per cent workers in other fields.

1,067,526 deputies (48 per cent) are women. More than a quarter of the deputies are 30 years old or under. The Soviets include representatives of more than 100 nationalities.

In the bourgeois countries there is a widespread belief that all deputies to the Soviets are members of the Communist Party, or at any rate Communist Party members are in the overwhelming majority. Yet this is not quite so. Among more than 2.2 million deputies, 1,246,603 are non-party members ... that is 56.1 per cent!

These figures speak for themselves. The deputies to all the local Soviets—regional, urban, or rural—are elected every two and a half years and to the Supreme Soviet, every five years.

The deputy is a plenipotentiary representative of the people, a connecting and organising link between the Soviets, as organs of power, and the people. It is on the personal and professional qualifications of the deputy, on his level of education and diligence and on the links he maintains with his constituents that the successful work of the Soviets largely depends.

The rights and duties of deputies and their work are governed by the Status of Deputies Act adopted in 1972.

In his theses on Soviet power Lenin wrote: '...the further development of the Soviet organisation of the state must consist in every member of a Soviet being obliged to carry out constant work in administering the state, alongside participation in meetings of the Soviet'.¹⁷ In conformity with this principle the Status of Deputies Act declares that the exercise of state power by the Soviets is based on the active participation of each deputy in all the work of the Soviet. The Act empha-

sises that in his work the deputy is governed by state interests and takes account of the requirements of the population of his constituency, as well as the economic, cultural, national and other specifics of the Union republic, Autonomous republic, Autonomous region, or national area which he has been chosen to represent or on the territory of which his constituency is situated.

The basic powers granted to the deputy under this Act are included in the 1977 Constitution, where a special chapter (Ch. 14 'People's Deputies') consisting of 5 articles is devoted to this question. Article 103 which begins the chapter declares: 'Deputies are the plenipotentiary representatives of the people in the Soviets of People's Deputies.'

'In the Soviets, Deputies deal with matters relating to state, economic, and social and cultural development, organise implementation of the decisions of the Soviets, and exercise control over the work of state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organisations.'

The role of the deputy in Soviet society is determined primarily by the fact that he is empowered by the people to participate in the exercise of state power and express their will and interests. The Act fixes the powers of deputies and the duties and rights of the Soviet and its organs in relation to the deputies. This refers to the participation of a deputy in the preparatory work for the sessions, to discussing the work of the standing commissions at such sessions and to his personal participation in carrying out the adopted decisions.

In the USSR there are no professional deputies. A new type of popular representative has been moulded there, who does not break with his trade or profession during his period of office, but remains at his factory, collective farm, university department or laboratory, i.e. lives among his constituents and shares their life.

As a representative of state power and a member of the work collective, the deputy actively participates in production and socio-political activities of society, setting an example of the

observance of Soviet law, labour discipline and the norms of socialist living. Deputies of the Soviets are chosen from the best possible qualified candidates. For example, among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1979 there were 30 Heroes of the Soviet Union and 288 Heroes of Socialist Labour, 174 deputies were Lenin and State Prize Winners. In all 1,301 deputies have been awarded state decorations and medals.

38 per cent of deputies to the local Soviets have been awarded state decorations and medals.

Exercise of state power by the Soviets is based on the active participation of each deputy in the work of the Soviet. Deputies decide questions of state, economic, social and cultural development, organise the implementation of the decisions of the Soviets and participate in controlling the work of the state organs, enterprises, institutions and organisations, and also in exercising the other powers of the Soviets.

The practical work of the deputy has been enriched in recent years by many new forms of mass activity both in the work collectives and at their place of residence. Important questions, for example, frequently arise when deputies receive their constituents. For this purpose the act has special provisions for raising these questions in the Soviet, for controlling the examination of suggestions, applications, and complaints already forwarded to appropriate organisations and institutions.

What are the rights and duties of Soviet deputies and how is their work organised?

The Constitution of many bourgeois countries expressly forbids the imperative mandate, whereas the Soviet Constitution stresses it as essential.

In his report to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 4 October 1977, which summed up the results of the nationwide discussion of the draft of the new Soviet Constitution, Leonid Brezhnev noted: 'Many comrades, including deputies to local Soviets, have proposed the inclusion in the Constitution of an article covering *electors' mandates*. These mandates are an expression

of the most diverse requirements of the population, reflecting the specific interests of individual groups of working people and of society as a whole. Fulfilment of these mandates is therefore an important part of the work of the Soviets and of their deputies. Suffice it to say that in the past two years alone more than 700,000 electors' mandates have been fulfilled. That is one of the real expressions of socialist democracy. It is important that not only deputies but also the heads of enterprises, collective farms, construction projects and offices should give due attention to the carrying out of mandates.¹⁸

At the suggestion of the Constitutional Commission the Soviet parliament supplemented the Fundamental Law and in the final version of the Constitution a special Article (102) was included. It runs as follows: 'Electors give mandates to their Deputies.

'The appropriate Soviets of People's Deputies shall examine electors' mandates, take them into account in drafting economic and social development plans and in drawing up the budget, organise implementation of the mandates and inform citizens about it.'

Mandates are extremely important. Being one of the forms for the expression of the will of the people, they exercise a real influence on the work of the Soviets and their organs and serve as an important means for drawing the people into government.

During the elections candidates meet their constituents. This, of course, is the case in other countries where elections are held, but the distinctive characteristic of Soviet democracy is the fact that during these meetings the electors make their suggestions known about all matters which concern the manifold activities of the Soviets, and give their mandates. Mandates may also be given at meetings attended by deputies and their constituents after the elections.

The deputy's mandate and his concern to fulfil it are part of the genuine Leninist tradition of democracy. At the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, which was held at the very out-

set of Soviet power Lenin's historic Decree on Land was adopted. It was based on 242 mandates given by the peasantry to their representatives. Mandates, which are the expression of opinions and suggestions on how best to organise industrial enterprises, collective and state farms, trade and transport, the services and recreation facilities, are also an important means for the participation of the working people in the work of the organs of state power. Mandates express the interests not only of the population of one constituency or another, but also those of the state as a whole. This is why many of the mandates approved by a Soviet are then included in the national plans for economic, cultural and social development.

Deputies to the Soviets are obliged to report about the fulfilment of their mandates to the electorate. From the reports of the executive committees of the Soviets and the deputies to their electorate it is possible to get an idea of the role played by the state in showing concern for the suggestions and wishes of the electorate and the organisational work necessary to their fulfilment. Here is one of the many examples. One of the deputies in the Mikhailovsky District Soviet (Altai Territory) was given the mandate to pay particular attention to rural planning. The district Soviet adopted a resolution on this matter. Deputies and activists began strict checking of the condition of roads, houses and farmsteads. Specialists were called in to check the implementation of soil conservation measures on the area which came under the jurisdiction of the Soviet and the condition of the lands within the cattle-breeding farm area. A general village plan was drawn up and now the villages in the Mikhailovsky District have become an example to others.

Every suggestion made to a deputy in the form of a mandate must be approved at a meeting of the electorate by a majority vote of those present. The mandate must be discussed and adopted by the Soviet. The people's deputy is responsible for carrying it out to those who sent him to the Soviet.

Responsibility for the implementation of mandates usually rests on executive organs of the Soviets and the enterprises,

institutes and organisations that are within the sphere of competence of the Soviets. But this does not mean that any measure of responsibility is lifted from the shoulders of the deputy. Deputies are obliged to personally participate in the implementation of electors' mandates and see to their being carried out.

In the Status of Deputies Act it is stressed that a deputy takes part in organising the population for the fulfilment of mandates and maintains continuous check on this work. Thus, the deputy acts as both organiser and controller. The organisational work encourages the involvement of the electors in the implementation of their suggestions.

In 1975, the newly elected organs of power adopted more than 760,000 mandates, and the overwhelming majority of these have already been fulfilled. This has involved the work of more than 2 million People's Deputies and more than 30 million activists.

Some mandates are designed for fulfilment not in two and a half years but over a much longer period. These are included in the Soviets' plans for the new period and thus the Soviets elected in 1977 have received them like a baton from the previously elected Soviets of 1975.

Not all the wishes, of course, can be carried out. It should not be thought that the electors only have to give a mandate for it to be automatically fulfilled. It is the task of Soviet deputies to clearly explain where necessary why the fulfilment of this or that request is impossible in the near future. Everything needs to be considered: whether the suggestion makes economic sense and whether the necessary resources and finance are available.

Electors' mandates, their character and purpose bear witness to the growing activity of the masses, the growth of their political maturity and their confidence in the Soviets to do everything for the good and happiness of the people.

The Status of Deputies Act establishes that in his work a deputy relies on Soviet activists, public organisations, local

volunteer groups, and the work collectives at the enterprises, institutes and organisations.

It is the first priority task of the Soviet deputy to increase the number of activists. This runs through all the legislative acts of the Soviet government for improving the work of the Soviets.

The Constitution and the Status of Deputies Act define the basic rights of deputies. A deputy has the right, for example, on the instructions of the Soviet to check the work of state organs, enterprises, institutes and organisations on matters relating to the jurisdiction of the Soviet. Furthermore, the deputy is entitled himself to initiate such checks. In the USSR the right to address inquiries is granted not only to members of parliament, as is the case in the capitalist countries, but also to deputies of all the other Soviets.

A deputy's inquiry is an effective means for controlling the work of the organs of state government and their functionaries. It is used to eliminate shortcomings as well as to receive information from officials on any matters of importance. This practice is now becoming more widespread. Thus in 1975, in the Ukraine alone deputies made 17,000 inquiries, which was almost half as many again as in 1972. This is an example of higher political activity of the people's deputies.

During the same year in another Soviet republic—Byelorussia—deputies made more than 5,000 inquiries on matters concerning the work of the executive committees, and their various departments and the executives in enterprises, institutes and organisations. The measures that were taken by various organs as a result of such inquiries were of considerable importance for the solution of a number of important questions of economic, social and cultural significance.

From 1970 to 1974 deputies throughout the USSR made more than 250,000 inquiries at sessions of the local Soviets.

A Soviet deputy has the right to approach any state or public body, enterprise, institution or organisation and officials on matters arising from his work. A similar situation exists in other

countries too. But only in a socialist state may a deputy make an inquiry which is organically connected with the work of the official or institution being questioned. Provision is made in the Constitution (Article 105) that in the event of an inquiry being addressed by a deputy the institution or officials concerned are obliged to consider the proposal within the time-limit established by law.

The suggestions of deputies on the most important questions must be considered by the appropriate executive committees of the Soviets, by the ministerial and departmental collegia, the Councils of Ministers and the Presidia of the Supreme Soviets. A deputy has the right to participate in considering the questions raised by him.

The level of activity displayed by deputies in collective discussion is characterised by the following statistic: in 1975 at meetings of the local Soviets in the Ukrainian Republic alone 359,000 deputies spoke, i.e. two-thirds of the whole Soviet body. They dealt with such topics as negligence and inefficiency and made concrete suggestions designed to improve the style and methods of work of the executive committees and their various sub-departments.

Another vitally important aspect of the work of the deputies is educational activities and ensuring the observance of socialist legality.

Deputies systematically report on their work to the electorate. Thus, for example, in the second half of 1975 more than 5 million electors in Byelorussia were present at meetings where deputies reported on their work. That year 98 per cent of all deputies to the Soviets reported on their work to their electors.

But it is not enough to grant deputies rights and impose obligations upon them. It is also necessary to create material conditions for their work. Therefore, the state guarantees each deputy the necessary facilities for the unimpeded and effective exercise of his powers. The Act provides juridical guarantees for the deputy's work, ensures his immunity (this applies both

to deputies of the Supreme Soviet and to deputies of all other Soviets), and guarantees their labour rights.

As distinct from the bourgeois countries, the deputies of all Soviets are guaranteed their wages and salaries at their place of work while discharging their duties (participation in sessions and fulfilment of the assignment of the Soviet).

All deputies wear a badge on their lapel (recently this was only the case with deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics).

Relations between deputies of all ranks and officials are built on the basis of equality. There were cases when certain executives forgot this and disregarded the opinion of deputies from the local Soviets. Article 26 of the Status of Deputies Act states that an official who does not fulfil his duties in affording help to a deputy in the exercise of his functions may be subject to punishment under the law up to and including removal from his post. This is an important guarantee and not one that is confined to paper alone.

Are there ever cases of infringements of the Status of Deputies Act in the USSR? There are, but they are few. When such an infringement does occur the guilty parties are widely publicised as a lesson to others. It was in this spirit that *Izvestia* on 26 May 1976 contained a report on infringements of the Status of Deputies Act.

Two deputies from the Dnepropetrovsk City Soviet, Alexander Dotsenko and Yekaterina Mitrokhova, who were requested by the standing housing commission to check the complaint from one of the city's institutes about unjustified alterations to the housing list, were compelled by the deputy director of the institute to lose a whole day waiting for the necessary documents for checking.

The two deputies are well known people in the city. Yekaterina Mitrokhova, a crane operator, was one of the foremost female workers at the enterprise where she worked. She was highly thought of by the electorate for concern for people and her high principles. Just as prestigious a person was Ale-

xander Dotsenko, an assistant steel founder. They had both lost a whole day at the institute.

The executive committee of the Dnepropetrovsk City Soviet considered this case in which the institute had failed to comply with the Status of Deputies Act. It was decided to notify the director of the institute. The executive committees of the district Soviet informed of this decision the executives at all enterprises, institutes and organisations. As for the persons guilty of infringement, they received a severe reprimand.

The need to increase the attention of the state and public organs and all officials to the opinions and proposals of deputies runs through the Status of Deputies Act. Soon after the adoption of the Act the Leningrad Regional Executive Committee with the participation of the deputies and the public control inspectorate checked the implementation of this Act in the various regional departments. It turned out that in a number of cases the criticism of deputies had not been given the necessary consideration and at times was treated as mere formalities. Shortcomings of this kind led to disciplinary action against two executives.

The same check was repeated a year later. It showed that the point had been made. Now all comments of deputies—written or oral—were given their proper due and treated in the time stipulated.

Deputies in the USSR are not professionals. Thus, the situation may well arise that a deputy in the course of performing his duty (carrying out the mandates or requests of his electors or considering complaints) is brought into conflict with officials, including the executives of enterprises and organisations where they themselves work. The question here may naturally arise: could the executives, under one pretext or another, transfer such 'troublesome' deputies to lower paid work or bring some other pressure to bear upon them?

The Status of Deputies Act is very precise on this matter: 'A deputy may not on the initiative of the administration be dismissed from his place of work at the enterprise, institution or

organisation, or expelled from his collective farm or by way of disciplinary action be demoted to lower paid work without the previous agreement of the Soviet, and in the period between sessions without the previous agreement of, correspondingly, the executive committee of the Soviet or the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.' (Article 32).

In the USSR, as we have seen, a number of organisational, political, legal and material guarantees for the work of the deputy have been established. The state organs, enterprises, institutions and their functionaries are obliged to offer all possible help to a deputy in the exercise of his duties.

The Communist Party has always shown great concern for raising the prestige and activity of the deputies. It is by the level of the work of the Soviets that the population frequently judges the policies of the Soviet state and its democratic character. In a speech to his electorate Leonid Brezhnev said: 'The Party and its Central Committee will continue to concern themselves about increasing the role and significance of the Soviets so that each deputy will be consistently able to fulfil the demands made on him by the Soviet system and the times we live in.'¹⁹

THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR— THE SOVIET PARLIAMENT

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Soviet Parliament, is the highest organ of state power, heading the whole system of representative organs in the country.

In terms of its formation and composition it most fully represents the 260-million Soviet nation and through its activity reflects their aspirations and will.

The Soviet electoral system mentioned earlier ensures that the deputies of the Supreme Soviet most fully reflect the whole of Soviet society, and mirror, as it were, the Soviet nation.

In the parliament of the tenth legislature, which was elected on 4 March 1979, there are 1,500 deputies. 522 (34.8 per cent) of these are workers, and 244 (16.3 per cent) collective farmers. The remainder included representatives of the working intelligentsia, doctors, writers, artists and officials of the Soviet, party and trade-union organisations. 32.5 per cent of the deputies were women. 56.6 per cent of the deputies were called to parliament for the first time, and 28.3 per cent of the deputies elected in 1979 were non-party members. The figures give some idea of the social composition of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the nation's all-Union parliament.

To give the foreign reader some idea of the evolution of the Soviet Parliament, let us go back to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which was elected in 1937 and numbered 1,143 deputies, 16.5 per cent of deputies were women and non-party members accounted for 23.9 per cent. But, perhaps, the greatest and most eloquent difference is between the educational levels. In 1937, only 17.9 per cent of deputies had higher education

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(in 1974—50.4 per cent); 3.5 per cent, unfinished higher education (in 1974—2.6 per cent); 22.1 per cent, secondary education (in 1974—33.8 per cent); 8.8 per cent, unfinished secondary education (in 1974—12.2 per cent); and 47.7 per cent, primary education (in 1974 only one per cent).

And finally for an even clearer comparison here are the following data:

In the Third State Duma—the pre-revolutionary Russian parliament, which possessed very limited powers—there were 202 estate owners, 65 landowners, 47 members of the clergy, 32 traders and industrialists, 29 office workers, 30 lawyers, 37 persons of free profession and only 11 workers and artisans.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR consists of two chambers—the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, both chambers being fully equal, i.e. there is neither higher nor lower chambers in the Supreme Soviet.

This bicameral structure of the highest organ of state power was suggested by Lenin soon after the formation of the Soviet Union with the aim of ensuring a harmonious combination of the general and specific interests of the nations and nationalities.

Such a structure is determined by the very nature of the Soviet multinational state and reflects the content and character of the work of its supreme organ. One chamber of the Supreme Soviet, the Soviet of the Union, expresses the common interests of all the working people of the USSR irrespective of nationality. The other chamber—the Soviet of Nationalities—expresses the specific interests which arise from the national characteristics of the various peoples of the USSR and their state formation.

The structure of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is thus a natural expression of socialist democracy, the moral and political unity of Soviet society and the equality and fraternal friendship that exists between all nations of the USSR. It differs from the bicameral structure of bourgeois parliaments primarily in the fact that no bourgeois parliament, even in the multinational

states has a chamber designed to consider and reflect the specific interests of the various nationalities.

The principal difference between the structure of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and that of the bicameral parliament of the bourgeois states consists in the fact that the chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are fully equal, whereas the chambers of bourgeois parliaments consist of unequal upper and lower houses: in the United States, for example, Congress consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and in France, the parliament consists of the Senate and the National Assembly.

In the USSR equality between the two chambers is guaranteed by the Constitution. Neither chamber has any advantages over the other, and the resolutions of each are equally binding. The equality of the two chambers of the Soviet Parliament is expressed both in the similarity of the democratic principles of their formation and in the full equality of their powers.

The Soviet of the Union is elected by citizens of the USSR according to their constituencies, which are equally represented. But if a similar system were employed at the elections to the Soviet of Nationalities it would lead to a predominance of representatives from the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, as being the most numerous, whereas the relatively small nations of Estonia and Turkmenia would be very much in the minority. To guarantee effective, that is to say, political and not arithmetical equality, the Soviet of Nationalities is elected by citizens of the Soviet Union according to their Union and Autonomous republics, Autonomous regions and areas in the following proportion: 32 deputies from each Union republic, 11 deputies from each Autonomous republic, 5 deputies from each Autonomous region and one deputy from each Autonomous area. Thus, for all these national entities, irrespective of the size of their population, there is complete equality in the number of mandates. But within each national entity the constituencies are equally represented.

Thus, there are 32 deputies to represent a population of 135

million in the RSFSR, while the same number of deputies represents a population of 2.5 million in Turkmenia, 50 million in the Ukraine and 1.5 million in Estonia.

As distinct from the bourgeois countries, the deputies of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet are elected on the basis of a single, direct, universal and equal suffrage by secret ballot.

Equality between the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities is also expressed in the fact that both chambers are elected for precisely the same period—five years (4 years before 1977)—and at precisely the same time without partial renewals. There is no system in the USSR whereby one chamber is elected for a certain period (like 9 years in the case of the Senate in France and 6 years in the case of the Senate in the United States, or is simply not elected at all, or consists of members by inheritance as is the case with the House of Lords in Britain) while the other is elected for a different period (like the House of Representatives in the USA is elected for two years and the House of Commons in Britain and the National Assembly in France for 5 years.)

The electoral system for both chambers of the Supreme Soviet is exactly the same as is the age of eligibility—21 years.

The Constitution of the USSR states that both the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities possess equal legislative initiative. A bill can be submitted for debate to either chamber. The Soviet system has no such procedure as the 'shuttle' whereby a new bill must pass backwards and forwards between the two chambers with each having the right of veto. Neither directly nor indirectly can either chamber of the Supreme Soviet foist its will upon the other. A law is considered as passed if it is adopted by both chambers by a simple majority vote.

Both chambers participate equally in the formation of the central organs of the USSR and exercise equal rights in controlling their work.

Article 115 of the Constitution of the USSR states: 'In the event of disagreement between the Soviet of the Union and the

Soviet of Nationalities, the matter at issue shall be referred for settlement to a conciliation commission formed by the chambers on a parity basis, after which it shall be considered for a second time by the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities at a joint sitting. If agreement is again not reached, the matter shall be postponed for debate at the next session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR or submitted by the Supreme Soviet to nationwide vote (referendum).'

The order followed in both chambers is the same. Sessions of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities begin and end on the same day. Discussion and adoption of bills takes place in each chamber simultaneously. If a bill is debated at a joint sitting of both chambers, votes are taken separately.

The Soviet of Nationalities has 750 deputies representing the specific interests of the populations of 15 Union republics, 20 Autonomous republics, 8 Autonomous regions and 10 Autonomous areas. Consequently all the socialist nations and nationalities, large and small, have the real opportunity to express their national interests.

The following are the results of the 1979 elections to the Soviet of Nationalities:

The deputies represented 57 nationalities. They included 252 workers, and 140 collective farmers. 247 deputies were women, 526 deputies were communists and 224 non-communists. 465 deputies (or 62 per cent) were elected for the first time.

The Soviet of Nationalities elects a chairman and four vice-chairmen.

Joint sessions of the two chambers are alternately presided over by the chairmen of each individual Soviet. Experience has shown that the work of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet is dominated by a spirit of ideological unity and creative cooperation in drawing up most important bills and resolutions on matters arising from both the internal life of the Soviet state and its foreign policy.

Both chambers of the Soviet parliament express the vital interests of the working people of the huge multinational coun-

try, and consider these interests from different, yet organically supplementary viewpoints.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR exercises supreme state leadership and guidance over the work of all organs of the Soviet state. It is the highest representative organ of state power in the country and is the bearer of sovereignty of the Soviet people.

The Soviet parliament has the prime role of exercising the tasks and functions of the Soviet state. Its sovereignty is enshrined in the Constitution. Article 108 states: 'The highest body of state authority of the USSR shall be the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.'

'The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is empowered to deal with all matters within the jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as defined by this Constitution.'

'The adoption and amendment of the Constitution of the USSR; admission of new republics to the USSR; endorsement of the formation of new Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Regions; approval of the state plans for economic and social development, of the Budget of the USSR, and of reports on their execution; and the institution of bodies of the USSR accountable to it, are the exclusive prerogative of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.'

'Laws of the USSR shall be enacted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR or by a nationwide vote (referendum) held by decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.'

The Supreme Soviet regulates social relations by the enactment of laws, which are acts of the highest juridical authority, the basis of legislation in all the most important walks of social life. Within the framework of this legislation of highest organisational, administrative and supervisory work of the Soviet parliament is exercised in relation to the whole system of state organs and in all fields of the economic, social, cultural and state construction and the internal and external policies of the country.

The right to initiate legislation in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is vested in the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of

Nationalities, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Union republics through their highest bodies of state authority, commissions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and standing commissions of its chambers, Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Supreme Court of the USSR, and the Procurator-General of the USSR.

The right to initiate legislation is also vested in public organisations through their all-Union bodies.

The reader has probably noticed that in speaking of the prerogatives of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR the word 'all' (all rights, all aspects, etc.) is frequently used. This is no author's licence, but the spirit and the letter of the Soviet Constitution, which does not circumscribe the rights of parliament or limit its activity in any field, as, for example, in France. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is competent in all fields of state activity and its enactments are invested with the highest legal authority.

The basic aspects of the work of the Soviet parliament are closely interlinked. The unity in its work stems from the organic combination of its functions as both a legislative and executive body.

Laws enacted by the Supreme Soviet express the state will of the whole Soviet people and represent the legal basis for the conduct of citizens and the work of the organs of state, as well as enterprises, institutions and organisations and their officials. All-Union laws have the highest force throughout the territory of the USSR.

This highest juridical authority invested in a law adopted by the Soviet parliament is shown, firstly in its indisputability. This means that no other organ can change that law, but, on the contrary, the law can alter any regulation, which has been established by an act of some other state organ. Secondly, it is shown in the obligatory conformity of the enactments of all lower standing organs to the law adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Laws, like all other enactments passed by the Soviet parliament, are final and function precisely according to the wording adopted by the chambers. No other body has the right to veto a parliamentary resolution, demand its rediscussion or permit the constitutionality of a law that has been adopted by the Supreme Soviet to be checked.

Thus, French or American parliamentary practice is completely alien to Soviet law.

The Soviet parliament pursues an active foreign policy directed towards the implementation of the Peace Programme drawn up by the 24th and 25th Party Congresses. In 1951, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted the Law on the Defence of Peace, which says: 'War propaganda in any form whatsoever undermines the cause of peace, creates the threat of another war and is therefore a heinous crime against humanity.' According to the law persons found guilty of the propaganda of war would be brought to trial as guilty of a serious crime.

In subsequent years the Supreme Soviet of the USSR similarly adopted a number of declarations, resolutions and other enactments in the field of foreign policy and international relations, directed towards the all-round defense of peace and the development and strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the Soviet Union and other countries.

Because of the importance of some international problems, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR controls the foreign policy of the Soviet government by hearing the reports of the Council of Ministers on matters of foreign policy. Thus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers frequently make reports at sessions of the Supreme Soviet.

These reports contain an account of the current international situation and a detailed presentation of the Soviet position which is designed to promote better relations between countries. The Soviet government has frequently declared that the solution of the international problems facing the world can only be achieved given the good will of all states and provided they are prepared to act not from positions of strength, but from positions

of reason. Deputies of the Supreme Soviet have often stressed in discussion of the Soviet government's foreign policy that it is in accordance with the vital interests not only of the Soviet people, but of all peoples throughout the world and therefore has the full approval of the Soviet people and its representatives in the highest organs of state power.

Measures taken by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are dictated by their concern for the safety and good of the people, for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union organically combines the principle of socialist internationalism with the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, the struggle for peace and the prevention of a third world war.

The Supreme Soviet has an important role in forming the other higher organs of state power in the USSR. At a joint session of both chambers it elects the collective head of state—the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, forms the government of the USSR—the Council of Ministers, elects the Supreme Court and appoints the Procurator-General.

Should the necessity arise, the Supreme Soviet introduces changes in the structure and competence of the state organs and sets up and reorganises USSR ministries and departments.

In exercising higher control over economic, social and cultural development the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decides important issues connected with the development of the economy, raising the people's living standards and the improvement of public amenities.

An important part of the work of the Soviet parliament is its supervision over such matters as the observance of the Constitution, the laws and other resolutions by all state bodies in the country. The collective head of state—the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet—is also accountable to the Supreme Soviet. The Supreme Soviet further controls the work of the government, the ministries and departments, the Supreme Court, the Procurator-General and other state organs.

In exercising these functions, the Supreme Soviet evaluates the

work of any state organ from the point of view of its legality, i.e. its conformity with the Constitution and the laws.

The Supreme Soviet exercises all-round control over the work of the government, especially with regard to its plans for national economic development, the state budget and the account of its expenditure. This is shown, for example, by the fact that 147 deputies participated in the debate on the national economic development plans and budgets at sessions of the Eighth Supreme Soviet.

In recent years the Supreme Soviet has held circumstantial discussion of government reports on the development of the health services, environmental conservation and the further improvement of the education system.

But whereas the Supreme Soviet has the means and opportunity to influence any other state organ, neither the government, nor any other organ is in a position to influence it. The Soviet government cannot, for example, call for a vote of confidence in the Supreme Soviet with the aim of gaining approval for a bill it supports. As distinct from the United States or France, for example, cabinet ministers are usually deputies in parliament, and as such directly and personally under the control of parliament as well as their electorate.

Also as distinct from the bourgeois countries, there is in the USSR no body like the Constitutional Court or Council, which is in a position to supervise parliament and its election and work. The Supreme Soviet itself judges the legality of the election of its members. At its first session it sets up a Mandate Commission, which receives details from the Central Electoral Commission. The report of the Mandate Commission enables the chambers to make a final decision regarding the approval of elected deputies.

We have given a brief account of the basic prerogatives of the Soviet Parliament, but it is enough to show that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, possessing the plenitude of state power, controls all aspects of state activity. It amends legislation, enforces the laws, exercises supreme control over their

observance and over the work of the state organs and takes decision on matters of Soviet foreign policy. All aspects of the work of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR reflect the desire to consider and more fully carry out the will and interests of the Soviet people. This work is performed under democratic forms and with the help of democratic methods.

The basic organisational form of the Soviet parliament is its sessions. These are general gatherings of deputies, where either jointly or in their separate chambers they discuss all matters of importance.

The deputies are informed well in advance (usually about a month) of the opening of a session of the draft laws and other matters which will be brought up for discussion.

Much preparatory work precedes any session, in some cases going on for several months or even years. With the aid of specialists and other competent bodies the deputies make thorough and accurate study of the proposed laws and, as a rule, discuss only those questions which have been so carefully prepared.

Drafts of proposed legislative acts on more important matters are published in the press for nationwide discussion. On the initiative of deputies collective discussion is often held locally on questions designed for the forthcoming session and on draft bills. This allows them to get the opinion of their constituents and, if necessary, express it in their speeches at debates.

The discussion of each question on the agenda begins with a report which is often heard at joint sessions of both chambers. The report presents the reasons why the bill should be adopted, outlines its distinctive features, and characterises the fundamental legislation which the proposed law is to establish. It also contains brief information on the preparations made for the bill, mentions the appropriate state organs, public organisations and scientific institutions which have participated in drawing it up and gives the suggestions of the electorate on the proposed bill.

Debates usually begin with co-reports by the standing commissions in each chamber or with the speeches of the deputies

themselves. At the conclusion of the debate a vote is taken on the proposed law.

In their speeches the deputies refer to successes achieved, mention shortcomings and criticise mistakes and oversights in economic, social and cultural development. Basing themselves on the facts and relying on the support of their constituents, the deputies make their suggestions which are designed to further strengthen the socialist economy, raise the living standards and cultural level of the Soviet people and improve Soviet legislation.

Each chamber of the Supreme Soviet forms fifteen standing commissions: mandate commission, commission on legislative proposals, planning and budgetary commission, commission on youth, commission on foreign affairs and commissions on various economic and social matters. In all they comprise 1,000 deputies, representing all sections of the population. The commissions prepare suggestions for discussion by the Supreme Soviet, its chambers and its Presidium. They also exercise supervisory functions, call upon and hear government representatives and ministerial executives and receive necessary explanations from officials.

According to Article 125 of the Constitution, 'All state and public bodies, organisations and officials are obliged to meet the requests of the commissions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and of its chambers, and submit the requisite materials and documents to them.

'The Commissions' recommendations shall be subject to consideration by state and public bodies, institutions and organisations. The commissions shall be informed, within the prescribed time-limit, of the results of such consideration or of the action taken.

Each session of the standing commissions is preceded by much preparatory work. Hundreds of specialists, scientific and other workers may be called in, who form sub-commissions and working groups set up by the commissions. They give advice, go to Union or Autonomous republics so as to study the situation *in*

situ and participate in preparing materials and sorting out the suggestions made by the electorate. The standing commissions of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities are accountable to the chamber which elected them.

Thus, the standing commissions are important auxiliary organs of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. They are its integral part and their functions are indissolubly linked with its functions. They ensure continuity in the work of the Supreme Soviet in the period between sessions and organise the work of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet and enhance their activity.

Besides these commissions, the Supreme Soviet may appoint investigatory or revisionary commissions on any question and call up ministers to their sessions. All institutions and officials are obliged to conform with the requirements of these commissions and make available to them any necessary documentation.

The vast amount of preparatory work allows the Soviet parliament within the comparatively short period of its sessions (3-4 days is the usual time) to discuss the most important matters of the state, economic and social and cultural life of the country, unanimously adopt well-founded decisions and enact laws.

Bourgeois politicians and the monopoly-owned press frequently portray the unanimous adoption of laws and resolutions by the Supreme Soviet as the result of pressure exerted on deputies and, therefore, as evidence of the undemocratic nature of the Soviet parliament. Thus, unanimity is treated in nothing less than ironical terms.

But how justified and appropriate is this irony?

Let us imagine for a moment that the government of one of the capitalist countries has, like the Soviet Council of Ministers some years ago, submitted to parliament a bill on shortening the working day without any alteration to the wages. It doesn't need a prophet to foretell what would happen in most capitalist parliaments. Those deputies who defend the interests of the bourgeoisie would rant on about infringements of the entrepreneur's freedom, and, in so far as they are in the majority in parliament, the proposal designed to improve the people's

living standards and cut capitalist profits would be rejected. Few would deny that such a bill would be in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the electorate. But in a bourgeois parliament decisions are made not by the working people but by the representatives of those classes who want the people to work longer and be paid less.

So why, when the supreme organ of state power in the USSR, which does express the will of the people, unanimously adopts a law, which is in the people's interests, is this considered a sign of the lack of democracy? And why, on the other hand, when a bourgeois parliament votes against proposals which really are in the interests of the majority of the electorate, is this considered a sign of democracy and of the unlimited power of the people?

The Soviet political structure rests on a socio-economic foundation which is principally different from that of bourgeois democracy. Political unity which characterises the work of the Soviet parliament is a natural consequence of the historically formed moral and political unity of Soviet society and its economic and class structure.

What is so surprising about the fact that between the elected representatives of the Soviet people there are no principal political divergences or differences? It would be more just to ask this question: what basis could there be for such differences, what social groups in Soviet society possess interests which run counter to the interests of society as a whole and on what grounds could any of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet oppose the laws under discussion? For however much the critics of Soviet democracy try they cannot point out one example of the supreme organ of state power in the USSR adopting a law or resolution which ran counter to the national interests of the people or rejecting a law which was in accordance with these interests. Such has never been or will be the case.

Of course, unity over basics and essentials does not fully exclude differences of interests between, say, the individual and the state, or the national and the local. But these are no longer

differences of an antagonistic nature. They do not affect what is fundamental and therefore they can be successfully resolved. Soviet democracy offers the widest scope for this.

Nationwide discussion of more important laws and resolutions before they are adopted has already become a tradition. We might ask the critics of the Soviet political system: which of the capitalist states holds similar nationwide discussion on the vital questions affecting the whole country? During these nationwide discussions heated debates take place with frequently contradictory opinions. But given unanimity over economic and political aims and interests a unanimous solution can finally be arrived at.

The work of the Soviet parliament and its organs takes place publicly. This publicity is such that it provides extensive, detailed and up-to-date information on the work of the higher organs of state power and their decisions.

Despite the absence of any impedances to holding meetings of the Soviet parliament and its chambers in closed session, should this be necessary, in practice the Supreme Soviet of the USSR holds no closed sessions.

During sessions of the Supreme Soviet invitations are extended to front-rank workers, collective farmers, members of the intelligentsia and foreign guests. There is room in the galleries for 900 persons. Thus, in the course of one session, several thousand people have the opportunity of witnessing the proceedings. The benches designed for the diplomatic corps and foreign journalists are never empty.

Each session of the Soviet parliament is widely reported in the press. During the sessions there are more than 250 accredited correspondents from different Soviet and foreign newspapers, radio and television present.

Live television broadcasts are relayed from the conference hall so that millions of viewers in the USSR and abroad can see and hear what takes place in the Soviet parliament.

All Soviet newspapers follow the course of the sessions, and many of them give detailed accounts of the reports, co-reports

and speeches at the debates, while *Izvestia* publishes in a circulation of 8 million the full texts. The radio also gives over much of its time to reporting the sessions. Decisions taken by the Supreme Soviet are also published in the periodicals. At the end of each session the minutes of the session are published in a wide circulation in the 15 languages of the Union republics.

All that has been said about openness of the work of the Supreme Soviet is true of the work of its bodies. During the sessions of the standing commissions, sub-commissions and groups invitations are extended to members of the press, radio and television. The Regulations of standing commissions state quite clearly (Article 37) that they 'must inform the public of their work'.

The Soviet parliament convenes its plenary sessions twice a year. According to Article 112 of the Constitution, special sessions are convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at its discretion or on the proposal of a Union republic, or of not less than one-third of the deputies of one of the chambers.

A session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR consists of separate and joint sittings of the chambers, and of meetings of the standing commissions held between the sittings of the chambers.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR functions continually for the period of its five-year term. In the USSR there is no such things as 'parliamentary recess' and the work of the Supreme Soviet continues all the time. In the interval between sessions it is carried on by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the standing commissions, and, what will unquestionably appear unusual for the foreign reader, the deputies themselves in their constituencies. For the Soviet deputy not only represents his constituency in parliament, but also represents parliament in his constituency.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is truly the highest organ of state power in the Soviet Union. Its role as the organ of national representation and the bearer of the will of the multi-million Soviet nation is fulfilled in the everyday practice of the Soviet state.

THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR—THE COLLECTIVE HEAD OF THE SOVIET STATE

The deputies of the Soviet parliament elect a Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which is a collective body, acting as head of state. When the 1936 Constitution was being drawn up the suggestion was made to elect a Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet not by parliament but by the nation as a whole by means of a referendum. This suggestion was rejected, however, as not in keeping with the traditions of Soviet democracy.

The democratic principles underlying the organisation and work of the organs of the Soviet state, exclude the possibility of forming an organ of state power which is independent of parliament or equal to it, and might therefore stand opposed to it. Article 119 of the Constitution defines the status of the Presidium in the following way: 'The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, at a joint sitting of its chambers, shall elect a Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which shall be a standing body of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR accountable to it for all its work and exercising the functions of the highest body of state authority of the USSR between sessions of the Supreme Soviet, within the limits prescribed by the Constitution.' This status of the Presidium stems both from its composition—it is elected exclusively from among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet—and its competence.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is elected at the first session of each Supreme Soviet. It consists of 39 members: a chairman, a first vice-chairman and fifteen vice-chairmen (traditionally, these are the Chairmen of the Presidiums of the Su-

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preme Soviets of each Union republic), a secretary and 21 members.

Members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet are elected from among eminent state and public figures who are Party and Soviet functionaries, workers, collective farmers, writers, artists, actors, representatives of the basic social groups in the USSR. They may be either party members or non-party members.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet includes some of the best representatives of the Soviet people. In the Presidium, for example, there are the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev; the famous tractor driver Alexander Gitalov; the poet Rasul Gamzatov; Zoya Pukhova, a weaver from Ivanovo; Nikolai Zlobin, a builder; academician Yevgeny Fedorov; the world's first woman cosmonaut Valentina Nikolayeva-Tereshkova; Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions Alexei Shibayev and many others.

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR decides the most important state questions at its sessions, when assembled in full. But it cannot be in session continuously. Yet matters relating to improving legislation and state, economic and cultural development naturally arise daily and demand immediate attention. The continuity of the work of the Supreme Soviet is ensured by its Presidium and standing commissions.

The Presidium, being the highest organ of state power between sessions of the Supreme Soviet and at the same time an integral part of the Supreme Soviet, is continuously called upon to exercise supreme power in the country.

The nature of the Soviet system and the principle of collective decision-making on matters of national importance, which underlies the whole state structure, explains the collective character of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, which is a collective head of state.

In all its work the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The composi-

tion of the Presidium may at any time be changed by the Supreme Soviet, which has the power to check the work of the Presidium, demand an account of such work and revoke any of its enactments.

Relations between the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Supreme Soviet are regulated by the Soviet Constitution in such a way that the Presidium cannot interfere in the work of the Supreme Soviet or exercise control over it. It cannot, for example, initiate the dissolution of parliament. It possesses none of the means for influencing legislation that belong to the heads of many of the bourgeois states. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers cannot change any laws enacted by the Supreme Soviet. As distinct, for example, from France, where the head of state has the right to demand a review of the law, or question its constitutionality, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet does not possess that right.

The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR convenes sessions of the Presidium, presides over them, presents orders and decorations, signs jointly with the Secretary laws, enacted by the Supreme Soviet, and ordinances of its Presidium in the name of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and receives the credentials and letters of recall of foreign diplomatic representatives. For all these duties, he may be replaced by the first vice-chairman or one of the fifteen other vice-chairmen. Since July 1977 the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR has been held by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev. The decision to join these posts together, which was taken at a Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, is of high political significance. It is a manifestation of the continually growing guiding role of the CPSU which forms the nucleus of the Soviet political system and all state and public organisations of the working people.

Each of the 15 vice-chairmen works in turn for a month or more in Moscow where he performs the functions connected

with the work of the Presidium. In particular, he presides over the various commissions of the Presidium, holds talks with foreign officials, presents awards and carries out numerous other duties.

Members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet also fulfil the various functions of the collective president. For example, in the name of the Presidium they present awards and preside over the commissions.

In ensuring the continual exercise of state power between sessions of the Supreme Soviet the Presidium takes decisions on questions of major importance affecting state and economic life, the country's defence and foreign policy.

Meetings of the Presidium are presided over by the Chairman, and in his absence, by his vice-chairman. The chairmen of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet participate in discussion with a deliberative vote, as do the chairmen of the appropriate standing commissions, deputies, ministers and executives of the central departments, institutions and public organisations should the need arise.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet ensures that its work is made public by being widely reported on radio and television and in the press.

The 1977 Constitution expanded and clarified the competence of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Matters which come within its jurisdiction are clearly divided into those which can be decided without the endorsement of the Supreme Soviet and those which it only has the right to decide between sessions of parliament and which are subject to submission for approval at the next session of the Supreme Soviet.

According to Article 121, The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR shall:

1. name the date of elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR;
2. convene sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR;
3. co-ordinate the work of the standing commissions of the chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR;
4. ensure observance of the Constitution of the USSR and

conformity of the Constitutions and laws of Union Republics to the Constitution and laws of the USSR;

5. interpret the laws of the USSR;
6. ratify and denounce international treaties of the USSR;
7. revoke decisions and ordinances of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and of the Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics should they fail to conform to the law;
8. institute military and diplomatic ranks and other special titles; and confer the highest military and diplomatic ranks and other special titles;
9. institute orders and medals of the USSR, and honorific titles of the USSR; award orders and medals of the USSR; and confer honorific titles of the USSR;
10. grant citizenship of the USSR, and rule on matters of the renunciation or deprivation of citizenship of the USSR and of granting asylum;
11. issue All-Union acts of amnesty and exercise the right of pardon;
12. appoint and recall diplomatic representatives of the USSR to other countries and to international organisations;
13. receive the letters of credence and recall of the diplomatic representatives of foreign states accredited to it;
14. form the Council of Defence of the USSR and confirm its composition; appoint and dismiss the high command of the Armed Forces of the USSR;
15. proclaim martial law in particular localities or throughout the country in the interests of defence of the USSR;
16. order general or partial mobilisation;
17. between sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, proclaim a state of war in the event of an armed attack on the USSR, or when it is necessary to meet international treaty obligations relating to mutual defence against aggression;
18. and exercise other powers vested in it by the Constitution and laws of the USSR.

The second group of questions is defined by Article 122:

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, between

sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and subject to submission for its confirmation at the next session, shall:

1. amend existing legislative acts of the USSR when necessary;
2. approve changes in the boundaries between Union Republics;
3. form and abolish Ministries and State Committees of the USSR on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers of the USSR;
4. relieve individual members of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of their responsibilities and appoint persons to the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Article 122, which defines the powers of the Presidium in relation to the second group of questions, thus guarantees the Constitutional framework of its activity in the period between the sessions of parliament.

The decisions of the Supreme Soviet are taken in the form of resolutions and ordinances, which are published both on questions of a normative character as well as those which relate to such matters as conferring awards, passing amnesties and granting citizenship. The resolutions and ordinances of the Presidium, like acts adopted by the Supreme Soviet, are signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Presidium.

One of the forms of the accountability of the Presidium to the highest representative organ of state power are reports delivered at sessions of the Supreme Soviet on ordinances adopted by the Presidium between sessions. As a rule, the Secretary of the Presidium delivers such reports.

The texts of approved ordinances are handed to deputies at sessions. Furthermore, all deputies in the period between sessions receive periodic detailed information on the work of the Presidium which contains material relating to all enactments adopted by the Presidium.

Such are the basic details with regard to the election and prerogatives of the collective head of the Soviet State. They differ

sharply from those belonging to a head of state in the capitalist countries. In the Soviet Union it is a parliamentary organ and not an individual which, as head of state, stands opposed to the representative institutions. This is probably the best way of characterising the functions of the Supreme Soviet.

HOW LEGISLATION IS DRAFTED IN THE USSR

We have already mentioned that laws in the Soviet Union are adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and that laws are usually passed unanimously. Actual adoption, which is a ceremonial occasion, is frequently shown on Soviet and foreign television. Very probably the reader of this book has seen the meeting hall of the Soviet parliament and the forest of hands that unanimously make a bill into a law.

Raising hands, pressing buttons, dropping the voting paper, getting up or going into another hall are the various ways in which the legislative organs of different countries express their approval of a new law. But to show the specifics of Soviet democracy, I should like to give a more detailed description of the preparation that goes into law-making and the extensive public involvement reflected in every line of Soviet legislation.

In socialist society the laws serve the people and express their interests and aspirations. They regulate the work of state institutions, public organisations and their officials and define the legal status of Soviet citizens. The force of socialist legality is in the strict and unswerving observance of Soviet laws by all institutions and citizens.

Laws and legal norms are not eternal. The political, economic and cultural life of Soviet society is continually developing and socialist social relations are improving and becoming more complex. It is, therefore, natural that the need arises to change the laws. The scientifically grounded creation of laws and legal norms is in accordance with the requirements of today and linked with the complex work of state organs, public figures, scientists and specialists.

It is not easy to know how and by what standards this or that system of social relations is to be regulated, or whether new

laws should be formulated, whether moral and ethical standards alone are sufficient and, finally, if legal norms are necessary which are the most expedient and promising. The correct solution of these problems requires a deep analysis of those social relations which are subject to legal regulation. A vast amount of factual material has to be processed, numerous variant solutions have to be considered and a forecast of possible results must be made. This is why in the Soviet Union a deep and thorough study of the social processes and the need for the projected act as well as a nationwide discussion must precede any legislative enactment.

Each law adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is, in the final analysis, the result of the collective work of deputies, who compare and collate the most varied and at times contradictory points of view, analyse thousands of letters and suggestions, and weigh up the opinion of electors, public and state organisations and the republican and local organs of state power.

Nationwide discussion of the most important laws before their consideration by the Supreme Soviet which ensures the widest public involvement has now become an established part of legal practice in the USSR. This practice is now enshrined in the Constitution and thereby has the force of law: 'Bills and other very important matters of state may be submitted for nationwide discussion by a decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR or its Presidium taken on their own initiative or on the proposal of a Union Republic.' (Article 114).

Bills are published in the national newspapers: *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Trud*, *Sovietskaya Rossiya* and a number of others which have a circulation of millions. Furthermore, the texts of the draft laws and relevant material are published in the republican newspapers which are printed in the languages of the Union and Autonomous republics. Reports on draft laws are also broadcast on national and local radio and television. All this means that to all intents and purposes every citizen of the USSR has the opportunity to learn about the new bill.

The tradition of nationwide discussion is many years old. All important draft laws were published and widely discussed by the whole population. These included Law on State Pensions (1956), Fundamentals of Legislation on Marriage and the Family (1968), Public Health (1969), Labour (1970), Land (1968), Water Resources (1970), Education (1973), Mineral Resources (1975) and a number of other drafts. In 1976 discussion was held on a draft law concerning the protection of historical and cultural monuments.

The high degree of political involvement among the population, care for the development and strengthening of the socialist state, interest in expanding the national economy and improving legislation ensures that the masses are involved in the preliminary discussion of questions which are to be brought before the Soviet parliament.

There is also considerable discussion among the population of matters relating to the development of the Soviet economy. For instance, on the eve of the 23rd, 24th and 25th Party Congresses draft proposals for the guidelines of the national economy over the subsequent five years were extensively discussed throughout the country.

Broad discussion of draft laws is of considerable importance in encouraging the creative activity of the masses. Thus, the draft Law on State Pensions attracted the serious interest of the Soviet people and was discussed in almost every family in the country. This discussion went on for more than two months, and during this period letters from private citizens and decisions and resolutions arrived at by mass meetings came flooding into the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the national newspapers in a never-ending stream. The legislative commissions of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities alone received more than 12,000 letters from individual citizens, collectives and organisations. Not one of the suggestions or comments made in these letters was left unconsidered.

As a result of this genuinely popular discussion the Law on

State Pensions was significantly improved both as to substance and wording. For example, one suggestion came from a group of women living in the town of Donetsk. It ran as follows: 'We request that account be taken of the fact that a woman is not only a worker engaged in production and an active participant in society's life, she is also a mother who must raise her children and do the housework. We therefore think that 55 as a pensionable age for mothers of many children is too high.'

This suggestion was accounted for by the deputies. Article 10 of the new law states that for women who have given birth to five or more children, and raised them to the age of 8, the pensionable age is reduced to 50.

The law also incorporated many other suggestions made by the people, such as the suggestion to raise old-age pensions for those whose working life was more than 35 years.

Education is another question of great interest to the people. The very history of the Fundamentals of Legislation on Education is a clear illustration of democracy in action in the Soviet Union.

The need for this document was pointed out by the Soviet of the Union's Commission on Education, Science and Culture. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet instructed the Council of Ministers to draft the Fundamentals of Legislation on the basis of preparatory work done by scientists, teachers, lawyers, eminent educationalists and representatives of the departments and organisations concerned. When the draft was ready, it was published in the press in accordance with a resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet for public discussion and submitted to the Commissions on Education, Science and Culture, the Legislative Commissions and the Commissions on Youth of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet.

During the three and a half months of nationwide discussion that followed, every Soviet citizen had the opportunity to give his opinion.

More than 3,000 suggestions and comments had been made since the publication of the draft law. To consider them the

Commissions set up a joint preparatory commission, which, besides deputies, included executives from the Union Ministries of Public Education, of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, of Justice and the State Committee on Professional and Technical Education. As a result of a careful analysis of all the suggestions a number of changes and additions were introduced into the draft law.

At a session of the Supreme Soviet called to debate the draft law, 39 deputies made further comments in their speeches.

Only after nationwide discussion of this kind, in which the comments and suggestions of the people, of the deputies and of the commissions were fully considered, was the new law passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in July 1973.

Alongside the publication of draft laws in the national press, the practice of publishing many other bills in special journals and periodicals is widespread in the USSR. This is owing to the desire to give the drafting activities a broad and varied character and involve highly qualified experts in its discussion by using special periodicals for the exchange of opinions on questions connected with the law under discussion.

For example, the draft Fundamentals of Criminal Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics, Fundamentals of Criminal Procedure, Fundamentals of Civil Legislation, Fundamentals of Civil Procedure, and a number of others were published in the following journals: *Sovety Deputatov Trudyashchikhsya* (Soviets of Working People's Deputies), *Sovetskoye Gosudarstvo i Pravo* (The Soviet State and the Law), *Sovetskaya Yustitsia* (Soviet Justice), *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost* (Socialist Legality), *Sovetskiye Profsoyuzy* (Soviet Trade Unions), *Sotsialistichesky Trud* (Socialist Labour) and in the Bulletin of the Supreme Court of the USSR and a number of other publications. The total circulation of all of these periodicals exceeds one million.

The participants in discussion on draft laws include workers and collective farmers, officials from party and Soviet organs, central institutions and local Soviets, courts, the Procurator's office, the law organs of internal affairs, scientists, activists from

public organisations, trade unions, Komsomol, and members of the comrades' courts.

Meetings, discussions, practical and theoretical conferences, general gatherings of workers, collective farmers and office workers at their enterprises, farms and institutions are just some of the means for drawing wide sections of the population into participating in the work of legislation.

The periodicals which publish draft laws regularly include articles, reports and accounts of discussions on the relevant issues. Thus on the two bills: the Fundamentals of Civil Legislation and the Fundamentals of Civil Procedure three legal journals *Sovetskoye Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost* and *Sovetskaya Yustitsia* alone published 175 articles and other material during the eighteen-month period of discussion. Some 2,000 separate suggestions, comments and additions on these bills were sent directly to the Legislative Commissions.

General discussion on bills usually takes place when the preliminary work on them has been completed. But even during the early stages public opinion and expert knowledge are taken into consideration. The working groups of the parliamentary commissions include eminent Soviet specialists. Individual questions relating to the drafts may be discussed at research and academic institutes.

As part of their work on the drafts the commissions of the Supreme Soviet carry out a number of measures before they are published with the aim of learning public opinion on current legislation. These include polls, questionnaires and meetings with the electorate.

Thus, after the national press carried reports that the Legislative Commissions began working on the draft Fundamentals of Legislation on Marriage and the Family, preliminary discussion on important details was frequently held at meetings and gatherings. These included such matters as marital age, the conditions and form of the marriage ceremony, parental rights, alimony and divorce.

Such a discussion, for example, took place at a meeting of

the collective of the Riga textile combine *Zasulauka Manufaktura*, which was attended by more than 400 women. The majority of those present supported the suggestions drawn up by the commissions which were directed towards strengthening marriage and the family. But at the same time the opinion was expressed on the necessity to further simplify divorce procedure in those cases where the family had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist and its restoration was impossible.

It should be pointed out that the suggestions made at this and a number of other meetings on changes in divorce procedure were implemented by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in the ordinance adopted on 10 December 1965, 'On Some Changes in Divorce Procedure in the Courts', which was passed before the adoption of the Fundamentals of Legislation on Marriage and the Family. The norms of this ordinance were later included in the Legislation. In conformity with the wishes of the working people the two-stage divorce procedure in the courts was abandoned and an advance announcement of divorce in the press was also dropped.

The standing commissions of the chambers also consulted with the people on other questions relating to the law on marriage and the family. Thus, workers at the Makhachkala Garment Factory in Daghestan at a meeting attended by 250 discussed the question of alimony collection procedure.

Obviously quoting statistics on the thousands of changes and additions made to laws in the course of preparatory discussion is not so significant of itself. What is important are their results. So the next question that arises is how and by whom are these suggestions considered and implemented? After all, not all of them can be incorporated in the text of the laws.

True, only the most important of the thousands and thousands of suggestions that are made in the course of discussion are considered when adopting the appropriate laws. The careful examination and implementation of suggestions made by individual citizens and the involvement of wide sections of the population in discussion of the most important legislative acts al-

lows alterations to be made that are of fundamental significance. For example, in the draft of the Fundamentals of Civil Legislation a number of articles were included on the suggestion of individual citizens which were designed to cover such fields as safeguarding the honour and dignity of the Soviet citizen, the sale of goods on credit and the hire of domestic appliances. On the suggestion of a number of scientific workers a preamble was added to the law which set down the aims and purposes of Soviet civil legislation.

As a result of the discussion on the draft Fundamentals of Public Health Legislation, published in *Izvestia*, and *Meditsinskaya Gazeta* the Supreme Soviet Commissions received more than 3,000 suggestions. These suggestions resulted in the following additions: Article 32 was supplemented with provisions ensuring specialised medical aid and periodic medical check-ups for workers with the aim of preventing disease by early diagnosis. Articles 32 and 52 were added to ensure privileges for invalids of the Great Patriotic War. Many other suggestions were also incorporated.

Earlier we mentioned a number of fundamental changes made to the draft Law on State Pensions at the instigation of private citizens. A list of similar examples could be continued.

But as we have also mentioned, thousands upon thousands of suggestions are made. Those that are made during the period of nationwide discussion but for one reason or another not included in the final text of the law (for example, because they are appropriate to only a small section of the country) are nevertheless given full consideration in the drawing up of individual state enactments. Many of them are forwarded to the appropriate ministries, central departments and local organs for consideration or practical implementation. In this way the results of nationwide discussions may have practical application in various ways.

In Soviet society the law ought to be accessible and understandable to everyone. And citizens of the USSR take part in the work of legislation not only via their deputies in parliament

but by direct participation in discussion on draft laws. But at the same time discussion of this sort promotes the growth of political and labour activity among the masses and strengthens their feeling of personal responsibility for public and state affairs and their intolerance of shortcomings and complacency.

Democratic discussion allows examination of all the advantages and shortcomings of a bill and helps understand the reasons for its adoption. Thus, Soviet laws are not directives issued from above. Public participation in their preparation makes people feel that they are co-sponsors of these laws, which in turn makes them feel personally responsible for their implementation.

Nationwide discussions on draft laws is the practical embodiment of Lenin's instructions to the effect that in the work of legislation it is necessary to proceed from the practical experience of the masses, express correctly the feelings of the people and ensure that the law conforms to the objective conditions and requirements for the development of society and influences that development in the necessary direction.

Of special importance are national economic development plans which are approved by parliament for a period of five years. The way in which these plans are adopted is worth special attention.

The general orientation for the plan is provided by the Communist Party. The reader can get a good idea of how this is done from the way in which the draft 'Guidelines for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1976-1980' were discussed. The draft which was presented by the Central Committee of the CPSU to the 25th Party Congress contained a scientifically based economic development programme. It was prepared by thousands of experienced specialists and planners working in local and central bodies, carefully discussed at various levels and finally approved by the December 1975 Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

The draft having been approved, the December Plenum decided that it should be put up for nationwide discussion, which

took place in many party, trade-union and Komsomol organisations, at meetings and in the press. The document outlined the new stage in the building of communism.

The country was taking a new step towards creating the material and technical base of communism, improving social relations, forming a new type of man and developing the socialist way of life. Efficiency and high-quality production were declared the slogan and objective for this Tenth Five-Year Plan period. This was why the party called upon the Soviet people to promote socialist emulation, achieve the all-round intensification of social production, accelerate scientific and technical progress and increase the productivity of labour.

Soviet man is increasingly becoming personally responsible for the affairs of his country, where he is the creator of the material and cultural wealth of society. This is most clearly shown in the vast scale of the nationwide socialist emulation movement, in the voluntary adoption by the work collectives of more intensive counter plans, in the creative search for more efficient means to intensify and raise the effectiveness of production and in the drive for economy in the use of labour and material resources, for better use of finances and for the all-round improvement of quality.

Nationwide discussion of the draft five-year plan is nothing new in the state and public life in the USSR. It was only the continuation of firmly established practice which dictated that all important questions, including the drafts of fundamental laws (and the national economic plan in the USSR is also a law), should be discussed not only by the party and state organs, but also by the public.

The new economic development plan was not drawn up at a closed session of some organ of state or quietly in the office of some minister or administrative official (as is the case in some bourgeois countries), but openly, in front of all the people.

It was discussed at party conferences and congresses in the Union republics and in the work collectives. For over two

months workers, collective farmers, scientists, engineers, technicians, pensioners, housewives—communists and non-communists—had been studying, analysing and comparing with their own experience the basic guidelines for the development of the country over the next five years. Meetings to discuss the plan in the Moscow region alone were attended by 2,500,000 people. In the Ukraine some 19,000,000 took part in the discussions.

The draft plan was also given full coverage in the press. Each day *Pravda*, which has a circulation of 12 million and is the most popular paper in the USSR, published a special by-line entitled 'Objectives of the Tenth Five Year Plan'. *Izvestia* (circulation 8 million) had a similar by-line entitled 'Towards the 25th Party Congress. The Five Year Plan: Comments, Suggestions, Polemics'. And the rest of the Soviet press followed suit.

Izvestia alone received some 3,000 articles and letters from individuals and collectives, containing many valuable suggestions, comments and advice, revealing new economic reserves and criticising shortcomings in the work of enterprises, institutions, local Soviets, ministries and departments. Many letters were published or forwarded to the appropriate authorities for consideration and implementation.

The participation of millions of Soviet people in the free and open discussion of key issues concerning their life such as the country's future socio-economic development or its domestic and foreign policy is an integral part of the Soviet way of life, and of socialist democracy in action.

Of course, not every Soviet citizen has a full and detailed understanding of the USSR's future economic development. But wherever Soviet people live and whatever they do, they all feel that the party document expresses what they themselves want. Every Soviet worker knows what the five-year plan means both for the country and for himself, therefore he tries to make his contribution to its fulfilment. In putting these ideas into practice, the Soviet people, whatever the difficulties, are irrigating deserts, building the Baikal-Amur Railway and the giant

Kama Motor Works, new plants, mines and power-stations. They are increasing crop yields and are doing everything possible for the further development of our country.

At party conferences, factory and collective-farm meetings and in the press—everywhere serious discussion took place on major economic problems and on the search for new long-term methods for improving production, raising quality and reducing time limits.

Unanimous approval and whole-hearted support characterised the preliminary discussion. But this, of course, went hand in hand with raising concrete problems and careful thought as to how best to solve the major objectives of the new five-year plan and make it a five-year plan of quality and efficiency.

The response of the Soviet people was not limited to approving the Central Committee's draft plan. Many suggestions, alterations and additions were made, which, of course, is the whole point of discussion.

Let us consider some of these concrete suggestions and additions. They are of all kinds and cover all fields. Some, like M. Nakonechny, a worker from the Yuzhkabel Factory, E. Butchnikova and M. Vlasenko, workers from Kharkov, are concerned with rapidly solving the problems that are holding up work in their factory. They write in a letter to *Izvestia* that the Tenth Five-Year Plan should provide for manufacture of new insulation materials.

Others, like L. Kostenko and N. Mironenko, collective-farm chairmen, A. Orlik, an agronomist, and L. Novak, an agricultural engineer, suggest that the section 'The Development of Transport and Communications' should provide for more hopper-type waggons for the railways.

The problem (educating the young and their training at work under the guidance of experienced workers) is of concern to N. Alymbekov from Frunze. Alymbekov is a turner from the Kirghizavtomash factory, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of Kirghizia and a Hero of Socialist Labour. He writes that tutorship requires guidance and constant attention. This, Alymbe-

kov believes, should be stressed in the Central Committee document.

Many comments concerned the national use of the land. 'Conserve and improve the land' might well be the central idea of many concrete suggestions.

In the section 'The Development of Agriculture' attention should be given, writes A. Malyshev (Moscow), to the restoration and construction of dams and dredging springs.

'The draft should provide for an increased output of chemicals to prevent soil erosion and improve its quality,' suggested N. Kulik, D. Sc. (Biology), A. Gabai, A. Podgornov, and V. Shamshin, all Cand.Sc. (Agriculture) from Volgograd.

'The ideas expressed on fish-breeding in the section on agriculture,' writes V. Groshev (Ryazan Region), 'should be made more concrete. I suggest the following wording: "To make fuller use of the possibilities offered by breeding fish in lakes, rivers and ponds."'

'I suggest that the ninth section of the draft which deals with the RSFSR should include these words: "Particular attention must be paid to the development of sanatoria in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East. Thorough medical check-ups and health-building facilities should be organised in the area adjacent to the Baikal-Amur Railway,"' writes Y. Sergeyenko, an engineer from Moscow.

An open party meeting held at the Oktyabr collective farm in the Tarashansky District (Kiev Region, Ukraine) suggested that the plan provide for rapid introduction of new types of high-yield cereals, particularly maize.

The list of similar examples could be extended indefinitely. All comments and suggestions were analysed and considered. It was not just a matter of publishing letters in the newspapers. The press and the presidia of the various meetings forwarded these materials to the relevant organisations and departments and ensured that appropriate measures were taken.

The 25th Congress of the CPSU summed up the results of this nationwide discussion. In October 1976 the Law on the Five-Year

Plan was adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the rich experience of the people, from which the party and the Soviets have always drawn their strength, once more became its vital source.

The finest example of socialist democracy at work was the nationwide discussion held in the summer of 1977 on the draft of the new Soviet Constitution.

The Constitution, adopted by the Supreme Soviet, was the fruit of many years of intensive effort by a large team of specialists. The Constitutional Commission, set up by the Supreme Soviet, included experienced party and state officials, representatives of the working class, the collective farm peasantry and the intelligentsia. Work on the draft was undertaken by eminent scientists, specialists and officials from state and public organisations. The draft was twice considered at Plenums of the Central Committee of the CPSU and by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

Thus, the text for the new Constitution was prepared by the most prestigious bodies and specialists. But it can be confidently stated that the decisive check on the preparatory work was provided by the subsequent discussion. It continued for almost four months and was in the fullest sense of the word nationwide. Altogether more than 140 million people took part in the discussion, i.e. over four-fifths of the adult population of the country.

The USSR has never known such a scale of public activity. Let's consider a few statistics: throughout the country some million and a half meetings were held at factories and collective farms, in military units and in residential districts to consider the draft. It was discussed at plenums and meetings of the trade-union, Komsomol, cooperative and cultural organisations. The whole of the Communist Party took part in the discussion. More than 450,000 open party meetings were held at which more than 3 million people spoke. The draft was considered by all the Soviets—from the village Soviets to the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics, i.e. by more than two million deputies repre-

senting the whole nation. And at each one of these forums the draft was approved.

Finally, there was the unending flood of letters from the Soviet people. The vast majority of these were characterised by patriotism, whole-hearted approval for the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, a broad outlook and mature judgement and the high demands placed upon the individual and the collective. The letters came from people of the most diverse occupations and ages, nations and nationalities, communists and non-communists. They carefully analysed the draft Constitution and outlined their ideas on the most varied aspects of life in Soviet society.

What about disputes? Were all the participants at the discussions in agreement? Were any changes made to the draft offered by the Constitutional Commission? The answer to these questions is simple. There were indeed many disputes and additions and alterations were suggested to the wording of the draft by many citizens. But then this was the whole purpose of making the discussion nationwide that the text of the Constitution could be improved by taking into consideration the opinions of the people.

A mere comparison of the original draft of the Constitution with its final text is enough to show that the nationwide discussion gave the opportunity to introduce into the draft a number of useful additions, clarifications and amendments.

Altogether some 400,000 suggestions were made for alterations to individual articles of the Constitution, which were designed to clarify, improve or supplement the wording of the draft. Having studied all these suggestions—many of which were, naturally, repeated—the Constitutional Commission recommended changes into 110 of the 173 articles of the draft and the addition of one new article. These alterations and additions were approved by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the final text of the Fundamental Law.

These alterations include, for example, such important provisions as the role of labour under socialism (as a result of which

Article 1 of the Constitution was changed), clarification of the article outlining the foundation of the economic system of the USSR (it is stated that this is state property and collective-farm and cooperative property), the role and significance of the work collectives, which are the primary cells of the Soviet economic and political organism, and a number of other questions. At the suggestion of the people an entirely new article was included in the text. This covered electors' mandates and stated that, as a rule, a citizen cannot be elected to more than two Soviets simultaneously. This helps to widen the circle of persons participating in the management of state affairs. The article makes it a duty for executive committees, deputies and other elected personnel to give a systematic account of their work both to the Soviets and to the work collectives and citizens at their place of residence.

The participants in the discussion unanimously approved the inclusion in the draft of a special chapter on the aims and principles of the Leninist foreign policy pursued by the USSR. At the same time the suggestion was made to add in this chapter that the Soviet Union is striving for universal and complete disarmament. This clause which is in the interests of peoples throughout the world has now been raised in the USSR to the Constitutional level.

In all, the Soviet parliament adopted more than 150 alterations and additions to the text of the Constitution besides those of a purely editorial nature. Consideration was given to opinions held by a large section of the population. To make one example, the article on a citizen's duty to work contains an alteration which was made according to thousands of separate suggestions.

The speeches and letters of millions of Soviet citizens in the course of the nationwide discussion of the draft Constitution reflect one of the tremendous victories of socialism—the formation of a new type of man, who does not separate himself from the state and considers the interests of the people to be a matter of his own vital concern.

Soon after the victory of the October Revolution Lenin noted that the exploitative system had left an inheritance of bitter dis-

trust from the masses towards anything that concerned the state. 'It is very difficult to overcome this, and only a Soviet government can do it. Even a Soviet government, however, will require plenty of time and enormous perseverance to accomplish it.'²⁰

Soviet power has solved this problem. Clear confirmation of this comes from the tremendous activity shown by the people in discussing the draft of the new Constitution. It was therefore with absolute justification that Leonid Brezhnev said in his report on the draft Constitution: 'We can say with confidence and pride that *it is the whole Soviet people who have in fact become the true creators of the Fundamental Law of their state.*'²¹

The main political result of the nationwide discussion consists in the fact that all the Soviet people declared that this was indeed the Fundamental Law that they had been awaiting, for it correctly determined their rights and duties. In consolidating what has been achieved so far, it shows the way for the future development of communist society.

The reader has only to open a newspaper in his own country to be confronted by worrying reports: rising prices on essential goods and services, increasing unemployment, forced evacuations of persons (particularly pensioners) unable to meet their rental payments, growing taxation, both direct and indirect, federal and local, and rocketing costs of transport, gas, light, telephones, and the postal services, etc., etc. I won't even quote you any figures, because by the time this book gets into your hands they will all be out of date by 10, 15, maybe even 20 per cent. Each year the cost of living in the capitalist world goes up and up. This continual rise in prices and the spiralling inflation that accompanies it have already become a daily feature of the capitalist way of life.

This sort of situation is unthinkable in the USSR, where there is no unemployment and no one is thrown out on the street, much less old people. The USSR has the cheapest rents in the world, and the lowest prices for gas, electricity, telephone and water. We have the lowest taxes in the world and these are being steadily reduced. A steady rise in the cost of living is unknown to Soviet people.

We have no inflation and none of the other numerous problems that beset the so-called free world. As distinct from these societies, developed socialist society gives its members broad social guarantees and frees the working man from uncertainty as to the future, from worry about where his next meal is coming from or about the roof over his head and from fear of the hazards of the market, which like the sword of Damocles hang over the heads of the workers in the capitalist countries.

The new Constitution of the USSR contains a special Article (23) which states directly that 'the state pursues a steady policy of raising people's pay levels and real incomes through increase in productivity'.

The Great October Revolution brought the working people in the USSR economic, social and national liberation and provided real opportunities for them to manage the affairs of society and the state.

'Our revolution,' Leonid Brezhnev said at the World Congress of Peace Forces in 1973, 'the victory of socialism in our country have not only proclaimed but have secured in reality the rights of the working man whatever his nationality, the rights of millions of working people, in a way capitalism has been unable to do in any country of the world.'²²

The first act of the new government in 1917 was to socialise the means of production. This brought about a revolution in social relationships, and signified tremendous progress in solving the question of equality.

In the Soviet Union no one can own a factory, a mine or a power station, and every citizen stands in the same relationship to the basic means of production, being their co-owners. No person may exploit the labour of another. This makes the citizens' equality before the law real and meaningful.

Not one class of Soviet socialist society has any special rights or privileges in politics. During the early years of Soviet power the working class was accorded some advantages in electing the organs of state power. This was dictated by the conditions obtaining during the civil war and the imperialist intervention and the necessity to ensure the supremacy of the working class over the petty-bourgeoisie. With the adoption of the 1936 Constitution all electoral privileges were rescinded.

Full equality for all citizens of the Soviet Union is secured by the fact that the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat has become the state of the whole people—a political organisation of the whole people.

This is clearly expressed in Article 34 of the Constitution:

'Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status.

'The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life.'

Political equality is clearly demonstrated in the following constitutional principles:

—all citizens have the right to vote irrespective of race, nationality, sex, religion, education, domicile, social origins, property, or past activities;

—all citizens have the right to hold any post in the state administration or public organisations.

Equal rights between men and women have been made a basic principle of the Soviet Constitution.

From the first days of its existence the socialist state made it the law that men and women should enjoy equal rights to elect and be elected to all organs of state power and occupy any post in the state and economic bodies. The USSR has consistently exercised the principle of equal pay for equal labour. Soviet women are accorded equal opportunities for education and vocational and professional training, except those that may be hazardous to their health. In the Soviet Union some 60 per cent of all specialists with higher and secondary specialised education are women. In industry women comprise 49 per cent of the working force, in the health services, physical culture and social services—85 per cent, in education and the arts—73 per cent and in science and technology—49 per cent.

Holding equal position with men in all spheres of society's life, Soviet women actively participate in running the state. In the local Soviets there are some 1,064,000 women and in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—487, which is almost a third of all deputies. Women also play a significant part in the work of the CPSU, the trade unions and the other public organisations.

In the Soviet Union much is done to allow women to combine labour with family life. The state ensures mother-and-child

care by providing paid leave of absence for confinement and pregnancy, special labour protection for women, an extensive network of nursery schools and free medical care. The decisions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU, which clearly show the extent of party care for mothers, are now being successfully implemented. Under the Tenth Five-Year Plan a number of new measures for improving working and living conditions for Soviet women and providing all-round help to the family in raising their children were introduced.

One of the greatest achievements of socialism is the establishment of equality between the numerous nations and nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union. Not only is national discrimination of any kind forbidden by law, whether in respect of political rights, obtaining employment or any other matter, in the Soviet multinational state, all factual inequality between nations has been eradicated.

Though the working class in the Soviet Union maintains its leading role, all the classes and social groups are gradually drawing closer together and Soviet society, now that developed socialism has been built, is becoming more and more homogeneous. Distinctions between mental and physical labour are becoming obliterated, as are those between life and labour in the towns and villages.

Under socialism, where social ownership of the means of production is dominant, there is no significant difference between the material standards of living of the various sections of the population. The distribution of material wealth is in conformity with the quantity and quality of labour input. This makes it possible to accumulate social wealth and create the material and technical base of communism, and thus eventually to create conditions for the distribution of social product according to one's needs.

But though communism is still in the future, even now, under developed socialism, steps are being taken to overcome income differentials. This is achieved by such economic measures as, for example, tax exemption for low-wage earners, the gradual low-

ering of the gap between the lowest and the highest paid and the preference which the state accords to raising low wage levels rather than lowering retail prices.

But of particular importance are the social consumption funds which are now being distributed to a large extent irrespective of individual contributions to production. Under the social programme outlined by the 25th Congress of the CPSU for the period 1976-1980 they are accorded a special role.

The social consumption funds provide free education, free occupational training, free medical services, mother-and-child care, the lowest rents in the world, old age pensions, free or cut-rate accommodation at sanatoria or holiday resorts, annual paid leave, student scholarships and child allowances. In 1940 the annual average per capita payment from the social consumption funds was 24 roubles, 1970—263, 1975—350, and 1978—404 roubles. In 1950 these funds amounted to 13 billion roubles while in 1975 the figure rose to 90 billion. They are again planned to rise under the Tenth Five-Year Plan by 28-30 per cent and will amount to not less than 115 billion roubles. Only a society which is on the road to communism can accumulate wealth for social expenditure at such rapid rates.

The social consumption funds are set up in the interests of society as a whole and each of its individual members. They form an important supplement to the main source of income under socialism—payment according to quantity and quality of work. They promote social optimism and confidence in the present and the future. Concern for the man-in-the-street and his well-being is a matter of prime importance for the party and state organs and largely determines the nature of Soviet legislation. The state provides free education, professional training, medical aid, housing, and many other social benefits. Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls leave school every year, while an army of specialists is being trained by the higher and secondary specialised educational institutions. And all that at the expense of the social consumption funds.

These also play an important part in the health services. The

25th Party Congress stressed that there is none more important social need than the concern for health of the Soviet people. Vast resources are therefore allocated to the health services.

Under the current five-year plan more than 60 per cent of the social consumption funds has been allocated to children, labour veterans and other members of society who are for one reason or another unable to work. Nursery schools and kindergartens for some 2.8 million children are to be built and there are to be more extended-day schools and groups, young pioneer camps, centres and houses, and out-of-school facilities. The lower pension limit is to rise, and the number of people receiving pensions and other allowances is to be increased, including former collective farmers. Both in terms of the level and conditions of social security, the collective farmers will come still closer to the industrial and office workers. Partially paid leave of absence is to be introduced for working women to attend to their children (if less than one year old), and privileges are to be extended for mothers of many children.

These services that are provided free by the social and cultural institutions for the population are by no means free for the state. The cost of one child's education from pre-school right through to university amounts to 6,000 roubles. The cost of one day at a hospital is more than eight roubles and housing is rated at four roubles a square metre. All in all the state allocates some five billion roubles a year for the upkeep of the state housing.

Thus, the social consumption funds are, as it were, an embryonic form of the communist system of distribution and play an important role in overcoming property inequality, where it exists.

Democracy under socialism means freedom from exploitation and unemployment, the right to work, rest, free education, free medical services, social security and housing. It also means the most essential political freedoms. The exercise of these rights and freedoms has become a matter of daily course for Soviet citizens. The fact that these rights and freedoms are guaranteed and

ensured practically constitutes the basic difference between socialist and bourgeois democracy.

Sometimes these social achievements seem to Soviet people, especially the young, as something they take for granted, because they have become the norm in developed socialist society. But analysis of their characteristic processes and phenomena and comparison with the situation that exists in the capitalist countries confirm their world significance and clearly show that only the socialist world possesses real prospects for the future.

The actions by workers in the capitalist countries constantly reiterate the same basic demands—guarantees against unemployment, wage increases, improvements in pensions and allowances, better conditions of labour, reduction of the working day and pension rights at 60.

In the Soviet Union these social benefits, like the right to work, education, social security and equality between men and women and between citizens of different nationalities have become perfectly normal. A man does not need to defend his rights by struggle—they are ensured and guaranteed by the Soviet state.

The essence of socialist democracy as a class phenomenon consists in the fact that it serves the interests of the working people and is based on socialist ownership of the means of production and the socialist economic system. Hence the democracy of state power and the whole socio-economic system of socialism.

The socialist state did not restrict itself to merely declaring the rights of the working people—it has taken positive steps to ensure the real conditions and opportunities for their exercise. The path to this was strewn with obstacles and difficulties resulting from the old system. These included the tremendous gap between the economic and cultural levels of the nations forming the USSR, the virtual inequality between men and women, illiteracy and ignorance, and the habits and traditions of the past. Everything possible was done to overcome these obstacles and create the objective conditions for wider mass involvement in running the state, for the exercise of rights and freedoms and for raising

living standards. Even in the past when the resources were very limited not only was growth in production of essential commodities guaranteed in the USSR but the country had the most progressive education, health protection and social services system in the world.

The life of the Soviet people today has become incomparably richer and more varied. This results directly from the consistent policy of the CPSU which is aimed at enriching the cultural life of society.

The rapid progress of all the Soviet republics and the USSR as a whole in developing the socialist economy and culture has created conditions whereby all people can enjoy the benefits of human civilisation on a basis of equality.

Among the material prerequisites that give the Soviet people confidence in the future and create conditions for the free development of the individual is the state's guarantee of housing.

The scale of house-building in the USSR is truly grandiose. Between 1918 and 1974, more than 2.9 million square metres of housing space were built. In 1973 alone 2,272,000 flats were built. The USSR leads the world in house building per thousand of population.

From 1960 to 1974 more than 166 million people, or two-thirds of the population, moved into new houses or improved their living conditions.

During the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1971-1975), 542 million square metres of housing were built and 56 million Soviet citizens received new flats or improved their living conditions.

Housing allocation today provides separate accommodation for more than 90 per cent of all families, whereas in the 50s this could only be guaranteed for some 30 per cent of all families.

Housing in the USSR is built largely at government expense, most of the flats being distributed free among the population. Out of the total capital investment in housing in 1973 the state, cooperative organisations and enterprises, and collective farms accounted for almost 89 per cent, while the people provided only the remaining 11 per cent.

Most important the increase in housing has not meant any concomitant increase in rents. Housing rent has largely remained unchanged since 1928, although the type of flats offered has improved considerably, as have real incomes.

Rents cover only one-third of the current expenditure on the housing upkeep. The remainder is provided by the social consumption funds. Rents amount to approximately one per cent of the average family budget and together with payment for utility services, approximately 4 per cent. Certain categories of people (e.g. doctors and teachers working in rural areas) have their housing and utility services provided free of charge.

The Soviet people can be truly proud of their socio-economic rights which are given real expression in the 1977 Constitution, the first constitution ever to include among the basic rights the right to housing.

It was the Marxist-Leninists who first pointed to the paramount importance of the socio-economic side of democracy and to the inadequacy of a purely formal approach to it.

Now, 60-odd years after the October Revolution it is clear to everybody (not only to Marxists) that it is impossible to talk about democracy disregarding its social content and the real benefits this or that political system will bring the working people.

The 1977 Constitution of the USSR extends socio-economic rights and provides guarantees stemming from the new conditions which exist under developed socialism. These rights now include the right to health protection, to housing and to enjoy cultural benefits.

The political rights and freedoms of citizens have now been formulated more fully. In particular, the Constitution declares the rights of citizens to take part in the management and administration of state and public affairs, the right to submit proposals to state bodies and public organisations and to criticise shortcomings in their work, the right to lodge a complaint against the actions of officials, state bodies and public organisations (including an appeal against such actions in a court in the man-

ner prescribed by law); the right to compensation for damage resulting from unlawful actions by state institutions or public organisations, or by officials in the performance of their duties. Also raised to the level of constitutional rights are the freedom of scientific, technical, and artistic work, the protection of the family by the state, the protection of the privacy of citizens, and of their correspondence, telephone and telegraphic communications. All state bodies, public organisations and officials are required to respect and protect the rights and freedoms, honour and reputation, life and health, and personal freedom and property of citizens.

The inviolability of the person, the freedom of speech, the press and public meetings are just some of the rights enjoyed by citizens both in the socialist world and under capitalism. But there is a big difference.

Rights and freedoms in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries reflect the breadth and variety of socialist democracy and have become an integral part of the socialist way of life.

In the USSR freedom of speech and the press are primarily guaranteed by the fact that the media—the newspapers, printing houses, broadcasting stations and film and television studios—all belong to the people and are not owned by private individuals or companies.

In the Soviet political life there is a firm tradition of discussing in the press and on radio and television the most important party and state resolutions, draft laws, and problems related to the socio-economic and cultural development of society. We have already mentioned the nationwide discussions of such important laws as the 'Guidelines for the National Development of the Economy of the USSR for 1976-1980' and the 1977 Constitution of the USSR.

You only have to open any Soviet newspaper to see the amount of critical material—articles from journalists or letters from individual readers—on the shortcomings that continue to exist together with suggestions as to ways to put them right. Fur-

thermore, these letters and articles do not attempt to conceal the names and positions of the guilty whether they be ordinary workers or government ministers, or hide any of the relevant facts.

It is a fundamental principle of the Soviet state that the rights and freedoms of the Soviet people are inseparable from their duties. Every Soviet citizen is obliged to observe the Constitution of the USSR, abide by the law, submit to labour discipline, honestly accept his or her social responsibilities, observe the norms of socialist living and preserve and protect state property. It is the sacred duty of each citizen of the USSR to defend the Motherland and serve in the ranks of the Armed Forces of the USSR. Furthermore, socialist democracy requires that each citizen perform such duties as are designed to strengthen socialist social relations. The higher the organisation and self-discipline of all the working people, members of socialist society, the more effective will be the system of socialist democracy and the more extensive the rights of Soviet citizens.

The rights and freedoms of the Soviet people must be put to the service of communist construction and their exercise must not run counter to the interests of society. Citizens' exercise of their rights and freedoms is inseparable from the performance of their duties to society, the state and fellow citizens.

Citizens of the USSR are obliged to uphold the honour and dignity of Soviet citizenship, safeguard the interests of the Soviet state, help maintain public order, combat misappropriation and squandering of state and socially owned property, protect nature and conserve its riches, show concern for the preservation of cultural values and the upbringing of children so as to raise them as worthy members of socialist society, respect the national dignity of other citizens and strengthen friendship between the nations and nationalities of the multinational Soviet state.

One of the clearest and most unquestionable affirmations of the freedom engendered by the socialist system is its morality. In socialist society the cult of violence, cruelty and racial supremacy together with the propaganda of war and nationalism are

banned by law—a clear demonstration of humanism which goes hand in hand with socialist democracy. The state education system, literature and the arts and the whole social atmosphere in socialist society are full of a deep respect for man, his dignity and his right to build a life of his own choosing within the framework of the first society in history to offer the same opportunities to all its citizens.

But responsibility for the good of the whole of society requires limitations to be made on the expression and dissemination of certain views. The Soviet media will never allow their services to be used in the interests of spreading ideas of war, hatred, racial or national supremacy and discrimination, pornography or for any other immoral purposes. Far from restricting citizens' freedoms, this, on the contrary, protects human rights in the most humane understanding of that concept.

In the USSR actions, which are considered by a court to be either aimed at subverting or weakening the existing socio-political order or at disseminating deliberate lies with the intention of discrediting the Soviet state and social system, are punishable by law. Soviet law works on the principle that just as libel or slander, which are intended to discredit the good name of an individual citizen, are regarded as punishable offences, so libel or slander leveled against society as a whole should similarly be punished as social defamation of character.

Soviet society cares for each of its citizens, and each citizen in turn is required to show concern for the state. Each citizen gains a sense of satisfaction from his personal involvement in the common cause. The responsibility that is freely accepted by Soviet citizens for the affairs of society, whether it be at the factory, on the collective farm, in the office, laboratory or institution, gives their lives a purpose and makes them richer, more meaningful and more dynamic.

The socialist conception of democracy closely links citizens' rights and freedoms with their duties, and democracy with discipline. Democracy, freedom and discipline have always been subjects of ideological struggle. Bourgeois ideologists frequently

distort the reason behind the measures taken by the Soviet state for strengthening law and order. They represent these measures as 'violations' of the principle of democracy. On this subject Leonid Brezhnev said: 'Indeed, in our concern for the all-round development of the individual and of the rights of citizens, we have also given due attention to the problems of strengthening social discipline and fulfilment by all citizens of their duties to society. After all, democracy is inconceivable without discipline and a sound public order. It is a responsible approach by every citizen to his duties and to the people's interests that constitutes the only reliable basis for the fullest embodiment of the principles of socialist democracy and true freedom for the individual.'²³

Every Soviet citizen enjoys the advantages of democracy together with the other members of society. But at the same time he bears personal responsibility for furthering the interests of society and the good of the whole people. Any kind of irresponsible attitude towards labour and civic duties is at the same time a violation of the democratic principles of the socialist way of life.

Anarchistic wilfulness and disregard for the laws which express the wishes of the whole working people are incompatible with the character of the Soviet citizen. Socialist laws are intended to protect, expand and enrich the rights of the working man, but no one may be allowed to inflict any damage upon society, flout the dignity of honest people, or prevent them from living, working or resting peacefully. One of the most important requirements of Soviet democracy is complete respect for the law and intolerance of any anti-social behaviour.

Not only the state organs, but the numerous mass organisations and the Soviet public at large are the custodians of law and order in the Soviet Union.

Thus, the rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens as proclaimed in the Constitution are founded on the unity and harmony of the interests of the individual and society, the universal exercise of these rights and the obligation to perform social duties.

Soviet democracy and the Soviet way of life mean the rights and freedoms of all Soviet citizens, and form the environment in which they live, work and study and provide an atmosphere of confidence and social optimism.

But socialist democracy, which is an entirely new conception in rights and freedoms, is continually developing. Today, it provides more than it did yesterday; tomorrow it will provide more than it does today.

First and foremost among the rights of Soviet citizens granted by the Constitution is the right to work. This is only natural since the whole economic system of the USSR is designed to exclude unemployment and ensure growth of the productive forces. Furthermore, under socialism the character of work has changed. It used to be regarded a drudgery and a curse, now it is considered an honour.

What does the right to work mean in the USSR and how is it exercised?

A foreign tourist, strolling through the streets of a Soviet city, will undoubtedly notice many posters that carry employment offers—'Wanted...', 'Wanted...'. Outside almost every factory these words can be seen followed by a long list of vacancies. Soviet people have long forgotten the meaning of the word 'unemployment'.

But this has not always been the case. During the first years after the revolution unemployment did exist. The tremendous disruption of the economy caused by the Civil War and foreign intervention naturally brought unemployment with it. It took the country a long time to heal its wounds, restore its economy and reorganise production. By 1926, the number of unemployed was reduced to one million.

Three years later the First Five-Year Plan was launched. In 1930 the USSR was able to close all labour exchanges, and they have never been opened since. Later the right to work was written into the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, as was the right to receive guaranteed employment with payment in accordance with the quality and quantity of work.

This right was included neither in the 1918 Constitution nor the 1924 Constitution, for in those years it could not be ensured.

Under the 1977 Constitution this right has been considerably extended. Article 40 states: 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to work (that is, to guaranteed employment and pay in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work, and not below the state-established minimum), including the right to choose their trade or profession, type of job and work in accordance with their inclinations, abilities, training and education, with due account of the needs of society.'

'This right is ensured by the socialist economic system, steady growth of the productive forces, free vocational and professional training, improvement of skills, training in new trades or professions, and development of the systems of vocational guidance and job placement.'

The right to work is undoubtedly the most important of the social rights not only because all material and cultural values, as well as means of subsistence, are created by labour, but because only in labour can a man realise his potential, purpose and significance in society. The unemployment of millions of people in the capitalist countries is both a moral and material tragedy and is probably the most convincing proof that the capitalist system is bankrupt and historically doomed.

60-odd years ago the October Revolution did away with exploitation and oppression in Russia. For the first time after centuries of oppressive labour for his master the ordinary man was able to work for himself. The freedom of labour from exploitation, guaranteed by the socialist system, is the primary condition for the freedom of the individual.

The right to work in Soviet society is guaranteed by the socialist system, socialist ownership of the means of production, socialist organisation of the economy, which knows no slumps or crises, the continued growth of the productive forces and the ever increasing demand for labour.

As Leonid Brezhnev pointed out at the 25th Party Congress: 'We have created a new society, a society the like of which man-

kind has never known before. It is a society with a crisis-free, steadily growing economy, mature socialist relations and genuine freedom.²⁴

Let us recall that between 1970 and 1975 alone industrial production in the USSR rose by 43 per cent, some 2,000 major industrial enterprises were built and new areas, rich in raw materials and fuel, were developed.

The Soviet Union is coping with problems of a hitherto unknown scale. Every year hundreds of new enterprises are commissioned. Work is underway on such giants as the Kama Automobile Works, the Sayany-Shushenskoye Hydroelectric Power Station and the Baikal-Amur Railway. The riches of Siberia and the Far East are being extensively explored.

To implement this tremendous programme of economic expansion a work force of millions and millions is required, which is in itself one of the guarantees of the right to work.

Of course, here the experienced reader will immediately notice that all these vast industrial complexes offer work primarily for men. What about women? As a rule, major industrial complexes in the USSR, which do indeed largely employ men, are surrounded by textile mills, small- and medium-scale enterprises and service facilities, which for the most part employ women.

Capitalism and socialism are characterised by completely opposite approaches to the crucial question of employment.

As we have already mentioned, unemployment in the Soviet Union was done away with completely by the early '30s. Socialist industrialisation, collectivisation, and the cultural revolution made the process of liquidating unemployment irreversible.

But socialism's success in solving the problems of employment is by no means limited to merely doing away with unemployment. If we take into account one pattern which is very important both theoretically and practically, we can see that it is an even greater victory for socialism. Large-scale industry, not only under capitalism, but under socialism as well requires introduction of new and more productive technology and the replace-

ment of manual processes by automation. But unlike capitalism, socialism plans in advance that those workers who are engaged in types of work that are soon to be replaced by automated methods will be trained for other types of employment. This is considered an obligatory requirement before new machines and equipment can be installed. Furthermore, when these changes are made not only does socialism preclude any form of unemployment, it tries to ensure that at worst workers are made suffer no loss in terms of payment, while at best it tries to ensure an increase in their pay through retraining.

The Soviet state guarantees industrial and office workers not only the right to work, but also to receive pay in accordance with the quality and quantity of expended labour, while at the same time taking steps to improve wages so as to raise the minimum wage and ensure the growth of real incomes. Under the Tenth Five-Year Plan, for example, the average wages in the Soviet Union will rise by 16-18 per cent without any fluctuation in state retail prices—an unheard of phenomenon in the capitalist countries.

The Soviet state plans and regulates its labour policy. Its measures include primarily planned distribution of labour resources both between different areas of the country and within each area, reservation of jobs at enterprises for school leavers, introduction of a system of employment contracts and planned distribution of enterprises with regard for the availability of labour resources. There are all-Union and republican state committees on labour and social questions and the corresponding departments in the regions, territories and towns, whose task it is to keep record and distribute labour resources.

So far we have mentioned only the political and economic guarantees of the right to work. Now let us consider the legal guarantees.

The right to work is strictly protected by the law, and is defined in detail in the Fundamentals of Labour Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics, passed by the Supreme Soviet on 15 July 1970. Labour legislation was drawn up on the initia-

tive and with the participation of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

Under Soviet legislation no limitations in respect of sex, race, creed, nationality or social origins may be placed on the rights of Soviet citizens to receive employment. Consequently all members of society—men and women, young and old—have the same opportunity to exercise their labour rights and develop their creative potential. For certain categories of workers preferential conditions exist in regard to pay, work-time and additional leave. These relate to mothers, invalids, youths, people employed at health-hazardous enterprises or in the Far North, Siberia and a number of other localities where the climate is considered equally harsh, and workers who have worked for a long time at the same enterprise.

But, of course, even the very best laws require more than just the fact of their adoption. Their daily exercise must be ensured. In the Soviet Union numerous bodies exist to enforce labour legislation: the Soviets of People's Deputies, the courts and the Procurator's office, specially empowered state bodies independent of the management of the enterprise, institution or their higher organisations, and finally the ministries and departments. But what will undoubtedly appear strange to the foreign reader is that the enforcement of labour legislation is effected by the state organs as well as the trade unions in the form of a technical inspectorate comprising some 6,000 units and a three-million-strong group of activists.

All that has been said above relates to labour law as a whole. So let us take a concrete example. What do the trade union, factory or local committees in case a man is fired.

First of all, in the USSR one of the most important legal guarantees of the right to work is that no man may be dismissed without the agreement of the trade union committee. This relates to incidents of dismissal initiated by the management. In its turn the factory or local trade-union committee must give its consent before a worker is dismissed. This requires both legal justification for the act and a thorough examination of all

relevant details supplied by the management. But agreeing to a dismissal is the right and not the duty of the factory or local committee. If the latter considers the grounds insufficient, it may refuse to give its consent, in which case the administration is not entitled to dismiss the worker. The decision of a trade union committee not to agree to the dismissal of a worker is considered final and no one has the right to alter it.

All this is stipulated under the terms of Soviet labour legislation. But if, despite the refusal of the factory or local committee to sanction the dismissal, the man is still dismissed (which in practice is very unlikely) this is considered as a gross violation of the law and those guilty are liable to prosecution.

For certain categories of workers the law provides additional guarantees against dismissal. For example, pregnant women and mothers with under one-year-old babies may not be dismissed for any reasons.

It would, however, be naive to claim that no one ever violates labour law. For example, there are cases when the management never refers to the factory or local committee. Should this happen, what are the rights of the dismissed man and how does he go about asserting them? A man wrongfully dismissed makes application to a court, which reinstates him to his former position. The court in this case does not even trouble to enquire into the grounds for the dismissal, for if there has been no prior consent from the trade union, the dismissal was illegal. A worker who has been reinstated to his post must be compensated by the enterprise to the amount of his average earnings during the period of his enforced leave of absence up to a maximum of three months. After all, it is difficult to believe that an unjustly dismissed worker will delay longer than 3 months in submitting his complaint. Any losses incurred by the enterprise owing to the wrongful dismissal of an employee will be reclaimed according to the discretion of the court from the person or persons responsible.

Thus, under Soviet law, serious measures may be taken against managers who violate labour legislation.

What about redundancy? In the West this is a very real threat to the working people. People are simply made redundant and forced to swell the ranks of the unemployed. Of course, in the Soviet Union from time to time it is necessary to make staff reductions too. This may be the result of management reorganisation at an enterprise or institution or introduction of new technology. How are the labour rights of Soviet citizens guaranteed in this case? What duties does socialist society have in relation to these people?

In its all-round protection of the rights of the working man Soviet legislation provides a number of guarantees for workers made redundant. In such cases the management is obliged to find new work for those affected in this way. If no similar work can be found in the same organisation the administration is obliged to provide employment at another enterprise. Should the redundant man so desire, he may be offered employment in another locality and provided with all necessary expenses for the move together with housing.

If a worker is made redundant as a result of improvements in the administrative apparatus, measures must be taken by the management to find him immediate employment or help provided for his retraining in a new field. In these situations workers are given special privileges to ensure that their service record is kept intact so that there should be no adverse effect later on their pensions. Office workers who are transferred to the shop floor retain their average earnings over any period necessary for retraining.

Occupational retraining is very important in the case of redundancy. But it is equally important in many other cases as when, for example, a worker is simply dissatisfied with his occupation—for the right of choice of occupation is the right of every Soviet citizen. What opportunities are available, then, and what are a citizen's rights in case he wants to be retrained?

The need to acquire another, more promising and higher skill is mostly brought about by the introduction of new technology or equipment,

As in other countries, the scientific and technical revolution in the Soviet Union naturally leads to redundancy among the workers in certain fields. But thanks to the dynamic development of the Soviet economy universal employment is maintained and a massive programme for raising workers' qualifications and retraining is underway. This makes it possible for the labour force to be redistributed within an enterprise or between various industries.

Let us take an example. The switch-over from steam to diesel-electric locomotives on the railways led to many thousands of redundancies. But no one became unemployed. Having undergone the appropriate retraining engine-drivers, driver's assistants and firemen went on to the new diesel-electric locomotives and now work in incomparably better conditions.

Special courses are organised for training workers in new, additional or related occupations. These may be held directly at the factories or at special centres set up in the enterprises. Retraining is paid for entirely by the enterprise whether the worker remains on the shop floor or is required to attend courses. In either case the worker is guaranteed his monthly earnings. Thus, every year some 24 million people attend refresher courses and some 16.5 million of these are workers. At the same time more than 1.8 million complete training courses in additional or related occupations.

In the summer of 1976 the French press carried reports of the tragedy which struck the small French town of Le Péage-de-Roussillon when the Rhone-Poulenc Company shut down its textile mill. The several hundred men employed at the mill—the only one in the district—were made redundant.

In the capitalist world this is not an unfamiliar situation and it can take on tragic proportions when a small town with only one or two factories is hit during a crisis. The majority of the able-bodied population may be made redundant with disastrous consequences for their families.

This sort of situation is quite impossible in the Soviet Union. And not simply because under the socialist economic system it

is impossible for an enterprise to go bankrupt and shut down. The aim of production in the USSR is fundamentally different from the aim of production in the capitalist world. It is not the profits of the owner, but the good of the working man that has the highest priority. If an enterprise needs reorganising and production methods need changing, this is not carried out at the expense of the workers, but, on the contrary, in their interests and with their active participation.

Take this example. In summer 1976 the Soviet press carried reports of the closure of a mine in the town of Dimitrov (Donetsk Region), since its deposits had been completely exhausted. Over 1,300 men had been employed at the mine, but its closure did not affect the lives of any one of the miners' families, for most of the men were almost immediately offered work at a neighbouring newly opened mine. Working conditions at the new mine were far better, the coal deposits much larger and pay consequently higher. Those who had remained behind to close down the old mine and bring up the mining equipment worth some six million roubles were later transferred to the new one. It was finally decided to pull down the slag-heaps and convert the area into a park.

Of course, rationalisation of production is taking place in industry throughout the world. In the West this is often accompanied by massive redundancies, and it is always the old who suffer first. For a man of 45, for example, it is particularly difficult to find work. What is the situation regarding middle-aged workers in the Soviet Union?

Full employment in our country is a guarantee that the right to work is a reality for every age group, including the elderly, provided they are still able to work. For such people there are no obstacles to employment. On the contrary, the state is concerned that the elderly should continue to work, particularly in the sphere of material production.

The Soviet government has passed special acts according to which certain categories of pensioners or invalids may continue to receive either in full or in part their state pension together

with any other earnings they may be entitled to. The law guarantees the labour rights of the elderly not only regarding employment, but dismissal also. Age cannot be considered sufficient grounds for dismissal, and no trade union would give its consent to such a dismissal.

In this review of one of the basic democratic rights of Soviet citizens—the right to work—I have purposely dealt with a number of seemingly minor details. Yet they give a clear idea of the practical way in which the essential rights and freedoms enjoyed by Soviet citizens are exercised.

Together with the right to work one of the most important socio-economic rights of Soviet citizens is the right to rest and leisure. Article 41 of the Soviet Constitution states: 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to rest and leisure.'

This right is ensured by the establishment of a working week not exceeding 41 hours for workers and other employees, a shorter working day in a number of trades and industries, and shorter hours for night work; by the provision of paid annual holidays, weekly days of rest, extension of the network of cultural, educational and health-building institutions, and the development on a mass scale of sport, physical culture, and camping and tourism; by the provision of neighbourhood recreational facilities, and of other opportunities for rational use of free time.

'The length of collective farmers' working and leisure time is established by their collective farms.'

Soviet workers who are employed five days a week, work eight hours a day, those employed six days a week work seven hours a day for the first five days and six hours on the last working day of the week. On the days before public holidays working time is reduced by one hour.

For workers under 18, for those employed at health-hazardous enterprises, for invalids and certain other categories of workers (like doctors, nurses and teachers) the working day is reduced even further. Workers attending evening courses may also have a shorter working day without any loss of earnings.

Overtime is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and requires the consent of the factory trade-union committee. In

any event overtime may not exceed 4 hours in any two consecutive days or 120 hours in any one year.

Leave of absence depends on a number of circumstances, such as age, length of continuous service, conditions of employment, or the specifics of a particular industry.

Thus, workers under 18 receive a leave of not less than one calendar month, while certain categories of scientific, cultural and educational workers may receive 24, 36 or 48 working days of paid holiday. Workers in the main industries receive additional leave depending on their unbroken period of service, and certain other categories of workers are also entitled to additional leave according to their conditions of employment.

Let us consider some examples. In the metallurgical industry steel founders receive an annual paid holiday of 24 working days. In addition each steel founder with an uninterrupted service record of between two and six years receives from three to nine days additional leave. Workers in the timber industry also receive an annual paid holiday of 24 working days, but if they work continuously at the same enterprise they receive every three years an additional 24-day holiday. Consequently, every three years workers in the timber industry receive what amounts to two months' paid holiday. And this right belongs not to any special occupation but to all workers within the industry.

Workers, no matter what their occupation or profession in the Far North, are entitled to 18 days additional holiday.

The length of paid leave is decided by the Council of Ministers of the USSR together with the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. A worker's right to rest and leisure is protected by law.

Holidays are paid for not out of a worker's basic earnings (as is the case in the majority of capitalist countries), but from his average earnings for the previous year, which includes his basic piece-rate, all additional payments and allowances, bonuses, etc.

Compensation payments for the holiday the worker is entitled to are forbidden by law, because of the detrimental effect it may have on his health.

A question of great importance is the holiday schedule. In some Western companies it is customary for the whole work-force to take its holiday at the same time (usually during the summer). What is the situation in the Soviet Union?

In some cases it does happen that the whole work-force at an enterprise takes its holiday at the same time. But this depends primarily on the industry concerned. After all, you can't have a power station or the transport services out of action for a whole month. But in some industries, like sugar, tobacco, wine and wool, it is possible.

Thus, holidays in the summer months for all or most workers are, in principle, an attainable objective. But here the following must be remembered. In the capitalist countries, where neither the state, nor individual companies are concerned about how the workers spend their holidays, the question of when they take them may be unimportant. In the Soviet Union, however, where the state provides holiday accommodation for the working people, the matter is of considerable importance. Bearing that in mind, the idea of giving everyone his holiday at the same time becomes no longer feasible.

Of course, the chain of sanatoria and hotels is continually being extended to provide the maximum accommodation during the summer months. But to build such facilities for use in summer only would not be economically feasible for there are many people who like winter sports and winter holidays in general.

Therefore, at enterprises and institutions a holiday schedule is arranged by the management together with the factory trade-union committee, which takes into consideration the desires of the workers, the possibilities of fulfilling them and the needs of the enterprise.

Those entitled to receive holiday during the summer months include all workers under 18 years of age, workers attending evening schools and the teaching staff at schools, higher education establishments and technical colleges. Soviet legislation contains no requirements for the obligatory provision of holidays during

the summer months for students attending evening and extra-mural courses at secondary specialised and higher educational establishments. However, most of the collective agreements do contain such a point and this is taken into consideration in compiling the rota. But what about the holidays themselves? How are they spent?

In the USSR a great deal is done to provide favourable conditions for the cultural development and physical health of the people. Leaving aside the opportunities that exist for individuals to spend their free time, let us consider for a moment the question of annual holidays and the ways in which they may be organised.

The basis for organised rest and leisure in a socialist state was laid by Lenin during the first years after the revolution. He personally initiated the radical reorganisation of sanatoria and health resorts in Soviet Russia in the interests of the working people.

On 4 April 1919, Lenin signed a decree On National Health Centres and Resorts according to which all health centres and resorts together with all their buildings, property and land were declared the property of the country and designed for the use of the population.

Today in the USSR there are some 14,000 such centres, including holiday camps, sanatoria and health resorts. They have overall accommodation for two million people. In 1975 alone, 45 million industrial and office workers together with their families were provided by the trade unions with holiday and health treatment. Moreover, more than 10 million school-children attended summer camps organised by the trade unions.

A tremendous role in the organisation of leisure is played by the trade unions which control the state social insurance budget. From 1971 to 1975, accommodation at sanatoria and health resorts run by the trade unions (excluding centres designed only for leisure activities) rose from 148,000 to 195,000 or almost by 32 per cent.

Here it is necessary to remember that the equipment and prem-

ises of the health resorts are constantly expanding, with the old being replaced by the new and in many cases whole centres being entirely reconstructed. The sanatoria are being increasingly better equipped technically with new medical and diagnostic centres, polyclinics, and therapeutic mineral and mud baths. All this goes to improve the standards and efficiency of medical treatment.

However, the demand for these health resorts and sanatoria is not yet fully satisfied—a fact that is considered when allocating accommodation at health centres—and care is taken to ensure that only those actually in need of medical treatment receive such accommodation. Ultimately it is a matter for the trade-union committee to decide how to allocate accommodation at health resorts and sanatoria and this it does on the basis of both the state of health and length of service of the applicant.

Under the Tenth Five-Year Plan a massive programme is underway to increase the building of sanatoria and health resorts. Of the 85,000 new places planned for health centres over the period between 1976 and 1980, 63,000 will be taken up by sanatoria, which are given priority within the system as a whole. These sanatoria will be located in different regions all over the country.

One type of health centres which is perhaps not so well known abroad, but very common in the Soviet Union is the health-building sanatorium. Here workers may undergo a course of treatment after their working hours. The network is rapidly spreading. From 1971 to 1975, 388 centres of this kind were opened with places for 44,000 and during this same period some 7.5 million workers attended them, which is 3 million more than during the previous five years.

Today the tendency is to build large health-building sanatoria, which are installed with the latest medical equipment and serviced by highly qualified specialists. These are then designed to cover the needs of a whole group of enterprises situated near one another. This is important, first, because comparatively small enterprises now have access to permanent centres where their

workers can be given treatment, whereas in the past they were unable to run sanatoria of this kind alone, and, second, because in large sanatoria built on pooled resources it is possible to organise both health building and treatment on the basis of the most up-to-date methods and techniques.

But, of course, only a small percentage of the working population require the services of a health-building sanatorium. What about the vast majority of workers who simply want to go on holiday?

Today in the Soviet Union there is a broad network of institutions concerned with holidays and tourism and it is they that make 'the right to rest and leisure' accessible to all. Under the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1971-1975) the trade-union holiday and tourist departments catered for twice as many workers and their families as in the previous five-year plan. These departments alone have at their disposal almost one thousand hotels, holiday camps, and camp sites, more than 500 tourist and excursion bureaux, a vast fleet of motorised transport, 15,000 centres where tourists can hire equipment, subsidiary industrial enterprises, maintain rope-ways, canteens, restaurants and cafés.

In our age of developed technology and rapid urbanisation when the pace of life is continually accelerating, people take every opportunity to get away from the towns into the countryside, the lakes or the mountains.

Trade-union tourist departments offer a total of 7,500 excursions and tours around the Soviet Union. They include tours of Central Asia, the Urals, Siberia and Sakhalin, and take in such places of breath-taking grandeur as Lake Baikal, Lake Issyk-Kul, the River Yenisei (from Krasnoyarsk to the shores of the Arctic), and the River Amur (from Khabarovsk to the Sea of Okhotsk). In 1975 alone, some 26 million people went on tours and over 130 million, on excursions. This is almost three times as many as five years previously. At the same time hundreds of thousands of tourists went on package holidays abroad, and the number continues to rise every year.

This rapid growth not only demonstrates the increasing pop-

ularity of tourism but also the great concern shown in the Soviet Union for the health and rest of the working people.

Accommodation in hotels, holiday camps and camp sites rose by almost 100,000 places between 1971 and 1975. New, comfortable tourist hotels have now been opened in Minsk, Vilnius, Riga, Kishinev, Alma-Ata, Baku, Yerevan, Frunze, Khabarovsk, Tyumen, Kurgan, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Vladimir, Ryazan, Kaluga, Kalinin, Novgorod, Lipetsk, Murmansk, Ulan-Ude, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, and other industrial and cultural centres. There is also a wide network of tourist sites on the Caspian, the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, in the Caucasus, the Carpathians, the Altai, the Zailiisky Alatau and the Khibini Mountains, and on the banks of rivers and lakes like the Seliger, the Naroch, the Imandra, the Volga, the Dnieper, the Severnaya Dvina and the Yenisei.

Also a great favourite are the day trips to various resorts on specially organised trains.

Family holidays have received much attention, too. Through their trade-union organisations parents with children get accommodation on favourable terms at hotels and holiday camps. This accommodation includes a carefully balanced diet for the children, trained personnel to look after them and baby-sit, play facilities of a wide variety and all kinds of sports equipment.

Holidays and tourism received great impetus after the 25th Party Congress, which drew up a programme for the further growth of the material and technical base of tourism and outlined the structure of the capital investment necessary to meet this programme. Five hundred million roubles were allocated for the building of holiday centres and hotels and construction has begun on major projects of this kind in Moscow, Leningrad, Arkhyz, Gagra, the Crimea, as well as on the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, at Dombai, the Southern Ukraine and the Baltic. Part of these resources will be allocated to the eastern regions of the country for the development of a network of tourist hotels in Krasnoyarsk, Yakutsk, Vladivostok, Abakan, Chita, Novosibirsk, Sverdlovsk and other cities. It is also planned to build

camp-sites for motorists on the main routes, in the administrative and cultural centres and near the historical and architectural sites.

There has been a considerable expansion in the number of holiday centres, sports camps, fishing and hunting lodges and camp-sites provided by enterprises for the benefit of their workers and their families at week-ends.

Between 1974 and 1975, more than a thousand of these new centres were opened with total accommodation for more than 211,000 which meant that there were eight and a half thousand such centres serving 9.5 million people.

But what about the cost of holidays in the USSR? How expensive are they to the average worker?

For the overwhelming majority of Soviet workers there are no special difficulties in this respect. Twenty per cent of all accommodation at sanatoria and 10 per cent at holiday centres are provided free by the trade unions and of the rest, only 30 per cent of the cost is required to be paid by the worker.

The average cost of accommodation at a sanatorium in 1975 was 121 roubles. Consequently all a worker has to pay is 36 roubles. And this is for a full 24 day course of treatment with full board and all the necessary social and cultural facilities.

If this is true of sanatoria, it is even more true of accommodation at holiday centres, which costs considerably less. Thus, 12 days at a holiday resort for a family of four would cost the average worker between 40 and 50 roubles.

The trade-union organisations at an enterprise as a rule allow special reductions for the workers and their families in the price of accommodation at holiday centres. A worker usually ends up by paying no more than one rouble per day per person, all other expenses being covered by the enterprise.

Thus, in the Soviet Union holidays and tourism are not a commercial enterprise, but a matter of state concern for the health and well-being of the people.

EDUCATION IN THE USSR: RIGHT OR PRIVILEGE?

Socialism proclaims and guarantees all citizens the right to education. According to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR: 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to education.

'This right is ensured by free provision of all forms of education, by the institution of universal, compulsory secondary education, and broad development of vocational, specialised secondary, and higher education, in which instruction is oriented toward practical activity and production; by the development of extramural, correspondence and evening courses; by the provision of state scholarships and grants and privileges for students; by the free issue of school textbooks; by the opportunity to attend a school where teaching is in the native language; and by the provision of facilities for self-education.' (Article 45). The general level of education of youth in the USSR is higher than in any country in the world. The significance of this can only be really appreciated when it is remembered how backward Russia was before the revolution. According to the 1897 census only 28.4 per cent of the population above the age of 9 were literate. In 1923, Lenin gave the following information in his *Pages from a Diary* on the number of literate persons per 1,000 of the population: European Russia—330; North Caucasus—281; Western Siberia—218.

Education and culture are closely linked with democracy. People's participation in government demands a high educational and cultural level. The Soviet state is continually pursuing a policy of raising the general cultural level and political consciousness of the people, as well as training specialists and increasing their qualifications.

EDUCATION IN THE USSR: RIGHT OR PRIVILEGE? 185

Literacy is no longer a subject of statistics in the USSR, for illiteracy has long been a thing of the past. By the end of 1975, some 77 per cent of the working population had received higher or secondary (complete or uncomplete) education. In 1978, over 95 million people were studying (i.e. every third Soviet citizen). General and specialised education is continually expanding. In addition to the state education system there is a network of courses attended by 4.2 million for the more advanced workers to pass on their experience to their comrades, as well as more than 3,000 additional seminars and courses for workers in science and technology.

The cultural requirements of the people are catered for by thousands of cinemas, theatres and museums together with the enormous network of amateur cultural societies.

In 1928, the USSR published 34,767 different books and pamphlets with a total circulation of 270.5 million copies in 51 languages of the Soviet peoples and 17 foreign languages. By 1974, the number of different books and pamphlets published had risen to 86,771 with an overall circulation of 1,694.7 million copies in 61 languages of the Soviet peoples and 46 foreign languages.

Between 1918 and 1974, the Soviet Union published altogether 2.7 million different books and pamphlets with a total circulation of 42.8 billion copies.

All over the world today Marxist-Leninist literature is read. This literature holds first place in the world for the number of editions published.

The years of Soviet power have witnessed enormous development in the publication of fiction literature. Between 1918 and 1974, 239,572 works of fiction in the languages of the peoples of the USSR have been published with a total circulation of 9.5 billion copies. The classics of Russian literature and that of the other Soviet nationalities are published in huge numbers. The works of Pushkin, for example, have been published in a total circulation of 119 million copies; Tolstoy, in 143 million copies; Shevchenko, in 17 million copies; and Tumanyan, in almost 6 million copies.

According to UNESCO, the Soviet Union holds first place in the world for the publication of literature in translation. At present companies from 130 countries purchase translated literature from the USSR.

At the same time Soviet publishing houses translate and publish thousands of works by foreign writers. These include individual works, collected works of the classics of world literature and works by contemporary writers. The circulation of the classics of world literature in the USSR is significantly higher than it is in their countries of origin. For example, in the USSR the works of Honoré de Balzac have been published in a circulation of 23 million copies, Charles Dickens—24 million copies, Jack London—29 million copies, and John Galsworthy—13 million copies. The classics of world literature are also published in many of the languages of the Soviet peoples. Thus William Shakespeare has been translated into 28 languages, Heinrich Heine—20, Lu Hsün—23, and Romain Rolland—21. The series entitled 'Library of World Literature' contains, besides Russian literature and the literature of the Soviet peoples, the works of writers from 32 different countries. (The series has 330 major works by 188 different authors, not taking into account the collections and anthologies.) An important place in translated literature belongs to the writers of the fraternal socialist countries, together with the writers of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

These statistics show that mass accessibility—the basic objective in the publication of books in the USSR—has been attained. In the words of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet people is rightfully considered the most literature-minded nation in the world. But this evaluation applies not only to the publication of literature, but also to the general political and cultural level of the Soviet people.

In 1913, sixty-two books and pamphlets were published for every 100 of the population of Russia. In 1926, the figure reached 153, and in 1974—672. These figures are still more impressive for the Union republics. Thus, in 1913 for every 100

of the population there was only 0.1 book published in Kazakhstan and 0.01 in Turkmenia, whereas in 1974 these figures were 172 and 179 respectively.

The reading audience in the USSR is truly enormous. No matter where they are—in the metro, on the bus, the trolleybus or the tram, or simply resting at leisure—you will see people reading. The reading halls of the numerous libraries are always packed. There are 360,000 libraries in the USSR with a total collection of books amounting to 3.3 billion, and serving 180 million readers. There are book shops at factories all over the country and many workers, collective farmers and office workers have their home libraries. Over the last ten years the sale of literature has risen by over 80 per cent and almost doubled in the rural areas.

Without the high level of general culture and education that has been achieved under Soviet power, the participation of millions of Soviet citizens in governing the country would be impossible. Effective participation in the management of state affairs requires the necessary training, and though it is true to say that the Soviet Union has inexhaustible reserves of managers and executives, it must be remembered that it is the Soviet state that has trained them.

During the years following the October Revolution a genuinely democratic education system was devised, whose main characteristics consist in the following:

- equal opportunity for all Soviet citizens to receive education, irrespective of race, nationality, sex, religion, property or social status;
- a state system of schools;
- compulsory education for all children;
- a free choice in the language of education (i.e. education either in the native language or in the language of any of the nationalities of the USSR);
- free education at all levels, in which the cost of education is met by the state and grants or other forms of material aid made to the pupil or student;

—continuity in all types of educational establishment allowing the possibility for transfer from the lower grades to the higher;
—a Soviet type of education.

The Soviet Union has a single type of general education school which caters for all citizens.

What have been the results of this system? The first achievement after the October Revolution was the liquidation of illiteracy (achieved in the early thirties), then the establishment of compulsory primary education. Later compulsory seven and eight year education were introduced and finally, today, universal secondary education. This is one of the most outstanding achievements in the history of world civilization.

Now more than one third of the Soviet population is in receipt of one form of education or another at general education schools, vocational training colleges, technical colleges, higher and other educational establishments. The actual figures for 1974-1975 show that 89,841,000 persons were studying at one or other type of educational establishment (excluding the political education system).

Soviet power has also managed to overcome the great backwardness in the educational level of many of the peoples of the USSR, the national minorities, who particularly suffered under tsarist oppression. Many of these before the revolution had no written alphabet.

In some of the republics before the revolution not only was there no higher educational establishment, there was not even a secondary school either. In the academic year 1973-1974 there were almost 100,000 students attending the 15 higher educational establishments in Azerbaijan; 55,000, in the 12 higher educational establishments in Armenia; 42,000, in the 8 higher educational establishments in Moldavia; and more than 565,000, in the higher educational establishments in Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Besides the fact that all types of education in the USSR are free, the Soviet state provides a number of other privileges and material benefits to pupils and students.

The Constitution of the USSR and the Fundamentals of Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics on Education envisage substantial material guarantees of the right to education.

For example, Article 46 of the Fundamentals states the right of students to use, free of charge, laboratories, study-rooms, auditoria, reading rooms, libraries and other educational aids and facilities, including sports centres together with all their equipment and installations.

Seventy-three per cent of all those attending day institutions of one type or another are in receipt of a state grant. Furthermore, the principals of higher educational institutes have at their disposal a special fund for assisting needy cases (for example students with their own families where the wife is also a student). Then again, students who reached a certain standard of excellence in the examinations receive grants that are 25 per cent higher than normal, and specially gifted students may win state scholarships or scholarships given under the name of great cultural and public figures.

Every year the number of students receiving scholarships from industrial enterprises, collective farms, and state farms increases. On graduating these students become part of the highly qualified personnel in the production or management of the enterprise or farm.

The principals of the secondary schools are also in a position to offer material aid to needy cases (e.g. children of low-paid parents), and students at the vocational training colleges are on full state grants.

As for boarding schools, 25 per cent of the pupils in rural areas receive board and lodging free, while the remaining 75 per cent pay only half the actual cost. Clothing and text-books are also provided largely at state expense, and almost a quarter of all children in attendance receive free board. Parents are only required to pay in accordance with their means.

Some schools in the USSR have what is known as extended-day schools, in which the children remain in the school premises

usually from eight in the morning till six in the evening. Some 15 per cent of them receive free meals. Here they are looked after by teachers during after-school hours and have their free time carefully organised.

During the academic year 1974-75 there were some 8 million children at both the boarding schools and the extended-day schools.

Every year the Soviet government increases expenditure on education. In 1970, the total budget amounted to 5.9 billion roubles; in 1973, to 7.2; and in 1976, to 7.6.

Extramural education is very popular in the USSR, and is continually expanded and developed. The influence of the scientific and technical revolution and the need for more highly qualified specialists have led to a more flexible approach towards working students.

Thus, there are special three-year courses as well as individual classes at the evening secondary schools. Workers, who for one reason or another, have been unable to complete their secondary education, can do so by attending such schools at the same time as they improve their qualifications in their own particular field. This is because it is considered important not only to raise professional qualifications but also to promote the all-round, harmonious development of the individual. In the rural localities there are special training centres designed to cope with this problem.

Throughout the USSR there are some 5 million people in receipt of extramural education in one form or another. They are granted a number of privileges, such as shortened working weeks, or shortened working days, half-pay during their time off for study, and a period of up to 20 working days leave of absence on average pay prior to sitting for examinations. Similar privileges are accorded to all extramural students, whether they attend evening classes, take correspondence courses or receive any other form of non-full-time education.

Those who successfully cope with their work receive yearly, irrespective of their course, 20-40 calendar days for work in the laboratory, tests and examinations, a four-months leave of ab-

sence (in the higher educational establishments) or 2 months (in the secondary specialised educational establishments) during the period prior to presenting a diploma project. Pay is guaranteed throughout.

A qualified specialist with practical experience, provided his work is of the necessary relevance and he has the appropriate qualities required of a research worker, may immediately upon graduating from the higher educational establishment continue to do post-graduate work or join one of the research institutes and take a doctorate.

In 1974, there were some 97,000 post-graduate students in the USSR, of which more than 45,000 engaged in full time study.

Like all other categories of students, post-graduates receive the use of equipment, laboratories, libraries and other facilities free. At the same time they may be called away on business or go on expeditions and field trips for which the state provides all expenses from the cost of travel to accommodation in hotels. Full-time post-graduates are also in receipt of state grants.

A number of special privileges are provided for external post-graduate students. These include, in addition to the annual 30 days paid leave of absence for sitting examinations or submitting thesis, the 'library days' as they are called (one free day per week on half pay).

The training of scientific workers and teachers in the sciences and the raising of the qualifications of workers in the higher educational establishments, enterprises and other organisations may be carried out either through special courses or via the presentation of a thesis on completion of a period of post-graduate work. For the work of this type leave of absence may be granted of up to three months on full pay.

Thus, the right of Soviet citizens to education is truly universal.

Soviet society devotes special attention to the education of children suffering from serious malfunctions, such as blindness, deafness or speech deficiencies. There are 2,400 specialised schools

throughout the country, employing 53,100 teachers who have graduated from 13 faculties and departments specialising in children's disorders.

Those who are unfortunate enough to be bed-ridden for long periods are also provided for educationally. There is a system of correspondence courses, both secondary and higher, that is designed specially to meet the needs of the chronically sick.

Even in the prisons and other places of forced confinement eight- and ten-year education is offered according to the curriculum and with the same teaching method as an ordinary evening school, and every prisoner has the opportunity to receive full secondary education. Many cases have been known where former offenders have on completing their sentences gone on to the higher educational establishments.

Everyone knows that the Soviet Union is a vast country. But there is no place, however small, in all the numerous towns and villages that does not show the greatest concern for the education of children. In the rural areas where the distances are enormous a network of boarding schools providing eight- and ten-year education is in operation. The parents of these children usually have occupations which necessitate their being long periods away from home. Sailors who are on long distance runs have their own special schools organised on board and the teachers travel with them. Many other similar examples could be given, but that is not the point.

The main thing is that the socialist state does everything possible to ensure that every citizen receives complete education in accordance with his interests and abilities.

HOW THE DISABLED ARE PROVIDED FOR IN THE SOVIET UNION

Article 43 of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR states: 'Citizens of the USSR have the right to maintenance in old age, in sickness, and in the event of complete or partial disability or loss of the breadwinner.

'This right is guaranteed by social insurance of workers and other employees and collective farmers; by allowances for temporary disability; by the provision by the state or by collective farms of retirement pensions, disability pensions, and pensions for loss of the breadwinner; by providing employment for the partially disabled; by care for the elderly and the disabled; and by other forms of social security.'

Social security is one of the most important indicators characterising real living standards. What are the distinctive characteristics of the social security system in the Soviet Union today?

Two features stand out above all: the vast scale of social security in the USSR and its universality. Consider the following statistics: in 1976, more than 45 million people were in receipt of state pensions and other allowances, i.e. 17 per cent of the whole population. The Soviet system contains all the forms of social security mentioned in the conventions of the International Labour Organisation with the obvious exception of unemployment benefit, since there is no unemployment in the USSR. The Soviet people receive not only pensions and allowances, but also other forms of social aid, including the occupational training of invalids, free orthopedic treatment and provision of special transport facilities for the disabled, maintenance of the elderly and the disabled in boarding houses and treatment at health resorts. The universality of social insurance is one of the undoubted advantages of socialism.

Over the past few years there have been considerable improvements in social security in the USSR. During the first year of the Ninth Five-Year Plan the minimum old age pension for industrial and office workers was raised 50 per cent. Minimum pensions for collective farmers and their families were also raised. They now enjoy the benefits of a pensions system similar to that used for industrial and office workers. In subsequent years improvements were made in the payment of disability pensions to invalids in the First and Second Group, and families with two or more disabled people. Those belonging to the Third Group had their minimum and maximum payments increased. In November 1974, special allowances were introduced for children of families whose average per capita income was not more than 50 roubles per month.

Further improvements were made in war pensions to the disabled, and to families of those killed in the war, as well as a number of additional privileges also granted to this group.

In all during the years of the Ninth Five-Year Plan the incomes of some 40 million people rose through increases in pensions, grants and other allowances. Under the Tenth Five-Year Plan total payments from the social consumption funds are to go up 25-30 per cent.

Retirement age in the Soviet Union (60 for men and 55 for women) is considerably lower than in some developed capitalist countries. Furthermore, certain categories of workers, for instance those in the mining, chemical, metallurgical, timber and building industries or in transport, may retire even earlier (men between 50 and 55, women between 45 and 50). The retirement age is also five years earlier for war invalids, those who have worked for a long time in the Far North, women combine or tractor operators and certain categories of female workers in the textile industry.

Pensions in the Soviet Union are from 50 to 100 per cent of former earnings. This ensures that pensions differ little from former earnings and that no loss in living standards is felt upon retirement.

It should also be remembered that those benefits which a worker enjoyed during his working life at the expense of the social consumption funds—medical aid at home or in hospital—are still available free of charge once he has retired.

Retirement age is an important landmark in a man's life, whether he lives in a capitalist or a socialist state. What does this mean for Soviet people?

Labour veterans are highly respected people in socialist society and their knowledge and experience is of considerable importance.

Reaching retirement age signifies that a Soviet citizen has received the right to pension. That means that he is now free to choose what he wishes to do with the rest of his life—whether to continue working or to devote his time to public activities, rest and leisure, looking after his home and bringing up his grandchildren.

The party and the government are particularly concerned that pensioners should take part in socially useful labour. Their knowledge and experience can enrich the material and cultural life. Furthermore, work for a retired man provides moral satisfaction, raises the quality of his life and living standard and finally improves his health. The number of pensioners fully or partially employed continues to grow from 10.1 per cent in 1964 to 24.4 per cent in 1976. Thus, today almost one in four pensioners still works and this has a considerable effect on labour resources in the country.

Now let us consider another type of social security—temporary disability. What allowances and benefits are payable to Soviet workers when they fall sick?

Ninety per cent of all workers in the USSR when they fall sick receive full pay, whether their illness is a short-term or protracted, serious affair. Women who are expecting a baby receive a period of 112-days leave of absence on full pay during confinement and after the birth of their child. Full salary is also paid to those who have suffered disability as a result of injury sustained or disease contracted at work.

Sick-pay during temporary disablement is paid out on the first

day of the illness and continues until the patient is ready to resume work. Should the disease develop complications the patient will be considered an invalid and sick-pay replaced by a pension.

The most valuable thing in socialist society is man. Care for the health of the people was undertaken by the Soviet state from the very first years of its existence. Now the social organisation of the health services in the USSR is based on such principles as free qualified medical help and preventative medical research by the medical institutes. All citizens of our country have equal opportunity for receiving treatment irrespective of their material position. Free medical treatment has a favourable effect on the average Soviet family budget. In 1973, for example, per capita expenditure by the state on the health services and physical culture amounted to 42 roubles. The cost of maintaining one patient in a hospital bed for one month was approximately 240 roubles. More than 50 per cent of all medicines in the USSR are provided free of charge, and the remainder are sold at cut-rate prices.

Today the Soviet Union almost fully satisfies the demands of the majority of its population for medical services. Under the 1977 Constitution Soviet citizens were for the first time given the right to health protection.

'This right is ensured by free, qualified medical care provided by state health institutions; by extension of the network of therapeutic and health-building institutions; by the development and improvement of safety and hygiene in industry; by carrying out broad prophylactic measures; by measures to improve the environment; by special care for the health of the rising generation, including prohibition of child labour, excluding the work done by children as part of the school curriculum; and by developing research to prevent and reduce the incidence of disease and ensure citizens a long and active life.' (Article 42).

The USSR has the highest number of doctors, and their total number is over 25 per cent of all the doctors in the world, and 80 per cent of all the doctors in Europe (the population of the USSR is 7 per cent of the total world population). In 1970, there were 27.4 doctors for every ten thousand of the population

and by 1974 this figure had risen to 31.6. (The highest number of doctors in the capitalist countries is 20 per ten thousand.)

In recent years the USSR has become one of the world's leading countries in the provision of hospital beds. In 1970, there were 109 beds for every ten thousand of population, in 1974, this figure had risen to 116.

But the greatest achievements of the medical services in the USSR have been in the republics which in the pre-revolutionary days were backward economic regions. Whereas in 1973, the provision of hospital beds per ten thousand of population has risen almost nine times in the Soviet Union as a whole since the revolution, in Kazakhstan it has gone up 38 times; in Turkmenia, 37 times; in Kirghizia, 92 times; in Uzbekistan, 44 times; and in Tajikistan, 240 times. Similar rates could be shown for the increase in qualified doctors. Today in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian Republics there are three times as many doctors as there were in the whole of tsarist Russia. There are more doctors today in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian Republics than in England, Finland, Japan or in such countries as Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan.

The Baltic Republics present striking examples. There are 5 times as many doctors in Lithuania as there were in 1940; 4.5 times, in Estonia; and almost 3.5 times, in Latvia. In Latvia there are two and a half times more doctors per ten thousand of population than in the Scandinavian countries and more than in any developed capitalist country. In Estonia there are twice as many doctors per ten thousand of population as there are in England, France and Italy and almost twice as many as there are in the United States.

As a result of the continuing growth of the material and cultural level of the population and the improvement of the health services sickness and mortality have been sharply reduced.

Before the revolution 43 per cent of new-born babies died before reaching the age of five, and for the remainder the average life expectancy was 55 years. The average life expectancy for all children born before the revolution was 32. Now in the

USSR the infant mortality rate is reduced to 3.2 per cent. Mortality in other age groups has also dropped sharply.

The Soviet Union today has one of the lowest mortality rates in the world, being lower than in England, France, Sweden, the United States and many other countries. Average life expectancy is now 70 years, i.e. more than twice what it was in pre-revolutionary Russia.

There is no such thing in the capitalist countries as a 'peasant pensioner'. What is the situation with farmers in the Soviet Union? What provisions are made for their social security? The successes achieved by the Soviet people in creating the material and technical base of communism and the growth of the national income have permitted a major step to be taken in the development of Soviet social security—the introduction of pensionable security for collective farmers on the basis of the Law of Pensions and Grants Payable to Collective Farmers, which was adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 15 July 1964. The document is based on the main principles of the Law on State Pensions. From 1 January 1968, collective farmers were permitted to retire at 60 for men (instead of 65 as was the case previously) and 55 for women (instead of 60). As a result, the number of collective farmers in receipt of a pension rose in one year by 2.3 million.

Great care is also shown for mothers working on the collective farms. A woman who has given birth to five or more children and brought them up to the age of eight is eligible to retire at 50 (i.e. five years ahead of time).

As was mentioned above, from 1 July 1971, collective farm members had their minimum pensions for old age, disability and loss of the breadwinner increased. Pensions for collective farmers are now based on the Law on State Pensions for Industrial Workers, Office Employees and Members of Their Families. From 15 December 1974, significant increases were also introduced in the disability pensions of collective farmers and their families.

There are today some 12 million pensioners who were collective farmers.

To enjoy the benefits of the social security system in the capitalist world the working people are forced throughout their working lives to pay a considerable portion of their earnings to pension funds. Furthermore, they have to make contributions into sick-pay funds and for unemployment benefit. Thus, the total contributions made by a worker in the capitalist world in order to receive an old-age or disability pension or unemployment benefit is very considerable indeed.

Who pays for social security in the USSR?

No contributions or deductions are made from earnings in the USSR. Pensions, allowances and grants all come out of the state budget and funds formed from contributions made by the socialist enterprises, organisations and collective farms.

The 25th CPSU Congress outlined important new measures in the field of social security to be carried out under the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

In consistently following a policy for raising the material and cultural living standards of the people, the 25th Congress of the CPSU has drawn up a broad social programme. It envisages the further improvement of social security by:

- raising the minimum retirement pensions for industrial workers, office employees and collective farmers;
- providing for a further approximation of social security benefits for the collective farmers, industrial workers and office employees;
- establishing pensions for former collective-farm members with the necessary length of service on a collective farm or at a state enterprise, organisation or establishment;
- introducing care allowances to pensions for collective farmers—Group One invalids;
- raising allowances for invalids since childhood, and paying them regardless of children's age;
- increasing pension benefits for mothers with many children;
- making fuller use of the opportunities for greater involvement of pensioners and invalids in social labour;

- expanding the network of homes for invalids and old people;
- continuing the construction of prosthetic and orthopedic centres for invalids;

- expanding the production and improving the quality of individual means of conveyance, orthopedic and prosthetic devices; and taking measures to improve the industrial training of invalids;

- improving rations in homes for invalids and old people.

We have given a lot of information and statistics on pensions and payments for various forms of disability, but in the Soviet Union care for the elderly and the disabled does not stop at financial payments. Old people and invalids, who are not in need of hospitalisation and who have no relatives, who are obliged by law to look after them, may if they wish enter old people's homes at state expense.

The Soviet state gives special aid to children. Everyone who visits the Soviet Union knows that there is only one privileged class—children. From the legal standpoint children are considered as being not capable of work. The state offers considerable help to families for the upbringing and maintenance of children. The Soviet state is estimated to spend 35 per cent of its resources on children.

The development of nursery schools throughout the country permits the successful combination of family and social upbringing, saves women a considerable amount of time in their house work and allows them to play a more active part in social production. In 1974, there were some 11 million children in attendance at the permanent pre-school institutions while more than 4.5 million attended the seasonal nursery schools.

In the towns and rural settlements at least half the children of pre-school age attended these institutions. Furthermore, 80 per cent of the cost of maintaining children at these establishments is met by the state.

Every reader will know only too well how expensive articles of children's clothing and toys are in the bourgeois countries. But in the USSR the state ensures that these goods are avail-

able at specially low prices. It is estimated that state concessions on children's goods exceed one billion roubles a year.

The material security of those who for one reason or another are unable to work and the protection of health are one of the most important activities of the Soviet state. The Soviet Union has built up an extensive system of state social security, social insurance and medical service. From the first days of its existence the Soviet state undertook to provide material security for the aged, the disabled, the members of families who had lost the breadwinner and chronically sick children. This has remained its fundamental concern to this day.

DOES PRIVATE PROPERTY EXIST IN THE SOVIET UNION AND IS THERE ANY RIGHT OF INHERITANCE?

This is a question I have had to answer many times during my talks in other countries on Soviet law. It is not so much that people abroad have a stake in private property or the laws on inheritance in the USSR, but rather that a considerable number of politicians (sometimes, unfortunately, those occupying high positions in their governments) during pre-election or similar campaigns hope to terrify their electorate with the thought that if the 'left' get into power, then they, like the people in the Soviet Union, will lose their personal property, or at any rate be forbidden to bequeath it to any one else. Is this really the unhappy lot of the Soviet citizens?

The right to own personal property is one of the fundamental rights of the Soviet citizen. Article 13 of the Constitution states: 'Earned income forms the basis of the personal property of Soviet citizens. The personal property of citizens of the USSR may include articles of everyday use, personal consumption and convenience, the implements and other objects of a small-holding, a house, and earned savings. The personal property of citizens and the right to inherit it are protected by the state.'

A Soviet citizen's right to personal property is the right to own, use and dispose of at will his own personal belongings, which he has acquired as his share in the distribution of the total social product (chiefly through distribution according to his labour) for the satisfaction of his material and cultural requirements.

But the right to private property may arise not only as a result of payment for work performed. For example, a man may be lucky enough to win money on a state lottery or loan-scheme. Then again a man with deposits in the savings-bank will receive

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two to three per cent annual interest. Or an article may become a citizen's personal property as a result of a gift or through an inheritance. These sources of possession do not result from personal labour, but they are, nevertheless, legal.

Soviet laws protect the right of personal property and inheritance as one of the fundamental rights of the citizen according to the Constitution. The law guarantees the owner full right to dispose of his property in the satisfaction of his material and cultural requirements and according to his individual abilities, habits and inclinations.

For this purpose various legal methods and forms have been devised in Soviet society.

The right to personal property is connected with all the other means afforded by socialist society for the satisfaction of individual requirements. It is simply one of the legally instituted methods for expressing the link between society and the individual, which is designed to further the all-round development of the personality of each citizen.

Therefore, in order to have a better idea of the distinctive features of the right to personal property in the USSR and its importance in Soviet society, it is necessary to give a very general outline of the place this right occupies in the overall system of property rights in socialist society.

In the Soviet Union a distinction is made between socialist ownership of the means of production, which is the economic basis of the socialist state, and personal property which is closely linked with socialist property.

In the USSR the means of production are owned by society. The principal form of socialist ownership is state property (belonging to all the people). State property includes the land, its minerals, waters, forests, factories, mines, power stations, railways, waterways, airlines, pipelines, auto-transport, banks, means of communication, agricultural, trading and communal enterprises and the main housing fund in towns and urban settlements.

State socialist property means ownership by the whole people

and it forms a single fund which is at the disposal of the state of the whole people.

The other form of socialist property is ownership of the collective farms and other cooperative organisations, and of their joint undertakings. Collective-farm property includes: tractors, combines and other machinery, livestock and means of transport. Housing cooperatives own their houses, flats and dachas (country-cottages). Fishing cooperatives own their fishing boats and processing plants. In the rural areas there is a wide network of cooperatives running and owning shops, warehouses, and all kinds of goods.

These two forms of socialist property are gradually being drawn closer together.

Socialist property also includes property owned by the public organisations: trade unions, sports societies, creative workers' unions, and voluntary societies (which have their own enterprises, buildings, rest homes, palaces of culture, clubs and stadiums). The purpose of these organisations is to ensure that the means are available for developing literature, the arts, and aesthetical appreciation in general, providing leisure facilities ensuring that Soviet citizens are healthy and able to work, and organising various forms of entertainment. All the equipment necessary to the fulfilment of these important functions is owned by these organisations.

Thus, all property used for social production, the social services and for the satisfaction of the material and cultural demands of the population is socialist property. An individual citizen of the USSR cannot be the owner of a factory, a railway, a shop, a restaurant, a boutique, a cinema or of any other enterprise whose activity is of a social character.

But whatever a Soviet citizen uses for the satisfaction of his personal wants and what has largely been earned by his own labour may legally become part of his personal property, which may be inherited and may include such things as a house, dacha, car or livestock.

The law, as a rule, sets no limit to the quantity or value of

personal property. Limitations are only imposed by republican legislation on the size of dwelling houses and the number of livestock. Thus, a citizen living alone or a family living together with young children can only possess one house.

Article 13 of the Constitution is of particular importance for it states that 'Citizens may be granted the use of plots of land, in the manner prescribed by law, for a subsidiary small-holding (including the keeping of livestock and poultry), for fruit and vegetable growing or for building an individual dwelling. Citizens are required to make rational use of the land allotted to them. The state, and collective farms provide assistance to citizens in working their small-holdings'.

The fundamental principle of Soviet legislation on personal property is the following, also taken from Article 13: 'Property owned or used by citizens shall not serve as a means of deriving unearned income or be employed to the detriment of the interests of society.'

The question of personal property is closely linked to that of the individual labour of Soviet citizens.

Article 17 of the Constitution states: 'In the USSR, the law permits individual labour in handicrafts, farming, the provision of services for the public, and other forms of activity based exclusively on the personal work of individual citizens and members of their families. The state makes regulations for such work to ensure that it serves the interests of society.'

What about inheritance, how does the Soviet legislation approach this question? The right of inheritance is an important right of Soviet citizens, which is established in Article 13 of the Constitution.

Inheritance in the USSR can be effected according to the law or according to a will. Inheritance according to the law comes into force in the absence of a will.

If there are no heirs either according to the law or according to the will, or none of the heirs claims his inheritance, it becomes state property.

What sort of people become heirs according to the law? First-

ly, children (including adopted children), the spouse or parents (foster parents) of the deceased and a child of the deceased born after the latter's death.

Secondly, brothers and sisters of the deceased, his grandfather and grandmother (paternal or maternal). These have the right to inherit in the absence of those mentioned in the first category above or their refusal to accept the inheritance.

Heirs according to the law may include disabled persons, who have lived at the expense of the deceased for a whole year prior to his death.

Grandchildren and great-grandchildren may be legal heirs if there is no other closer living relative who is entitled to the inheritance. They inherit precisely according to their relationship to the deceased.

At the same time every citizen has the right to bequeath all his property to any one person or group of persons who may or may not be among his legal heirs, as well as to the state or to individual state, cooperative or public organisations. But it is not permitted to deprive minors or disabled children (whether adopted or not) of their rightful inheritance and the same is true of disabled wives (husbands), parents (foster parents) or dependents.

Those who inherit according to a will may be persons who were born after the death of the testator. Persons who are shown by the courts to be illegally claiming an inheritance have no rights to that inheritance.

Parents who have been deprived of their parental rights do not have the right to inherit according to the law on the death of their children and the same applies to parents who deliberately refused to pay alimony.

The testator may request that the heir fulfil some obligation to the benefit of one or number of persons.

A will must be written and the date and place of its signing indicated. It must also be signed by the testator and endorsed by a solicitor.

It may not, however, always be possible to get a solicitor

to witness a will, especially in some difficult conditions. The law therefore permits a will to be witnessed by such persons as the commanding officer of a military unit, the doctor in a hospital, the captain of a ship and a number of others.

In conformity with Article 529 of the Civil Code of the RSFSR the reading of the will should take place at the last permanent residence of the testator, i.e. the town or district where the latter was permanently resident.

The moment the will has been read the heir or heirs have right to immediate possession of the inheritance. The formalities of witnessing the right of inheritance, whether according to the will or by law, must be completed within six months of the death of the testator.

As distinct from the capitalist countries no death duties are payable in the USSR and only a very nominal sum is charged for witnessing the right of inheritance.

An inheritance may consist of a house, a motor car, share accumulations, or savings deposits.

The above deals with the standard inheritance procedure. But the situation is somewhat different in a peasant household which is frequently owned jointly and the death of one member of a family does not alter the property of the others. Therefore, Soviet law has formulated a special system for dealing with inheritance on a collective farm. If the property of a collective-farm household belongs in law to the household jointly, then in the event of the death of one of its members the right of inheritance to this property does not arise. However, after the death of the last member of the collective-farm household the property of the household may be inherited according to the law or according to a will.

All the above relates to inheritance in general, irrespective of whether the testators or the heirs are Soviet citizens or not. It often happens that property within the USSR is bequeathed to heirs living abroad, or alternatively testators living abroad leave property to heirs who are citizens of the USSR. In the USSR there is a special body, the 'Iniurkollegiia' (Associa-

tion of Lawyers) which helps solve problems affecting the interests of citizens of different countries. The body receives dozens and dozens of applications. Some citizens learn that they are in receipt of an inheritance abroad and they wish to have access to it, others wish to claim an insurance from a foreign company, or receive bank deposits left them, others still wish to bequeath something to a citizen of a foreign country.

From time to time one hears reports abroad to the effect that foreigners are not allowed to receive inheritances from Soviet citizens and conversely that Soviet citizens are not allowed to receive inheritances from abroad. The state supposedly appropriates them.

The truth of the matter, however, is quite different. The Soviet state does not even levy a tax on inherited money, however large a sum it may be and inherited property may pass freely through the customs without any duty being levied. Furthermore, the staff of the 'Iniurkolleguia' handle all the problems connected with the necessary documentation, whether the inherited articles are being transported from the USSR or to it.

Here are a few examples taken from recent years.

A property consisting of six living rooms, two kitchens, a barn, a fence, and a well was left by a woman in the town of Nimme in Estonia. The 'Iniurkolleguia' received a request from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to sell the property and forward the assets realised to a certain V. Pavlov, the brother and only living heir of the former owner. The request was fulfilled.

A long search was held for the descendants of a certain August Purga who died in America. He left no will, was unmarried and had no children, but his estate amounted to some nine thousand dollars. All that was known was that Purga was born in Latvia. After three years' searching his grand-nephew was found living in Novosibirsk and he received the inheritance.

A former Russian officer, F. P. (he asked for his name to be withheld in the press) informed the 'Iniurkolleguia' that as a child he had lived in the village of Dmitrovka (Kirovograd Re-

gion) and now an old man he wanted to present a gift to a children's polyclinic somewhere in the Kirovograd Region. His will was fulfilled. In July 1974, he was sent a receipt by the chief doctor at the children's hospital for his gift which was used to extend and improve the equipment in the department of infantile tuberculosis.

One of the descendants of Prince Golitsyn, Emmanuel Golitsyn, a British aviation company employee, bequeathed the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow an original painting by G.S. Sedov 'Ivan the Terrible and Malyuta Skuratov'.

There have been examples of people who have absolutely no connection with the Soviet Union whatsoever bequeathing the country articles of value by way of tribute to its achievements in the field of education and culture and its peace efforts. Thus on 26 February 1975 *Izvestia* carried a report to the effect that a certain Englishwoman, Edith Bailey, was so impressed by her visits to the USSR that she had decided to leave her own personal estate amounting to a substantial sum to a children's library in Leningrad. She was motivated in her decision by the fact that 'only in the USSR are children brought up in the spirit of genuine humanism'.

The 'Iniurkolleguia' receives letters from France, Sweden, the USA, Switzerland, Argentina, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Brazil, South Africa and many other countries. The staff carry out their work in a variety of different ways. For example, in 1976 *Izvestia* published the following announcement: "Iniurkolleguia" (5 Gorky St., Moscow) requires information as to the whereabouts of any living relative of Anna Alexandrovna Diuraya (née Kozyreva) born 1901 and died in France. She is known to have had a daughter, Tatyana Polyakova, born 1931 and other relatives, Vyacheslav and Milli Polyakov. The relatives are sought in connection with the reading of the deceased's will in France.

'The relatives are also sought of Stefan Stefanovich Pigulevsky, son of Stefan and Maria Pigulevsky, born 1922, in Byelorussia, and also died in France.'

In August 1976, the same newspaper carried an announcement for information as to the whereabouts of the relatives of Concordia Abakumov and Khadas Bai who had both died in the United States and left inheritances.

The staff of the 'Iniurkollegiia' frequently have to compile family trees to find out the nearest relatives of those who have died leaving money or property in other countries, so that the rightful owners shall receive what is theirs. The work of the 'Iniurkollegiia' guarantees one of the fundamental rights of Soviet citizens—the right to bequeath and to inherit.

IS THERE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IN THE USSR?

One of the most widespread myths in the West is the assertion that there is no freedom of conscience in the USSR, that religion is persecuted and that Soviet legislation infringes upon the rights of the church and those who hold religious beliefs.

What is the real situation and what precisely is Soviet legislation on matters of religious worship?

Soviet legislation on religion is justifiably called legislation on freedom of conscience. It guarantees all citizens of the USSR full freedom to determine their attitude to religion. Whether a Soviet citizen believes in God or not, whether he holds religious views or not, whether he wishes to join a religious body or not are all questions of choice left to the individual. No one in the Soviet Union is compelled to believe or to disbelieve, to take part in religious worship or have nothing to do with the church. Everything in this respect is a matter for the individual to decide according to his own convictions—it is his incontestable right. But at the same time every Soviet citizen is entitled to be a non-believer, renounce all religion and conduct scientific atheistic propaganda.

Article 52 of the Constitution declares: 'Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited.

'In the USSR, the church is separated from the state, and the school from the church.'

In answer to a question from the Novosti Press Agency on the position of religion in the USSR, His Eminence Pimen, Pat-

riarch of Moscow and All Russia said: 'Freedom of religious belief is a basic right guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR. All religious faiths, including the Russian Orthodox Church stand in an equal relationship to the state, and each one of them is autonomous. In the USSR people are not classified according to religion and religious beliefs are not asked for when seeking employment or applying for a passport or filling in a census form. Any infringement of a citizen's religious rights or those of the clergy are punishable by law. Citizens of the Soviet Union who hold religious beliefs or who are members of the clergy have the same rights as all other members of Soviet society, and they actively participate in the political, economic and social life of the country.'

On the subject of the individual rights and freedoms enjoyed by Soviet citizens we have continually stressed that they are guaranteed. What guarantees are made by the state to ensure that a citizen's right to freedom of conscience is upheld?

The most important guarantee is the law on the separation of the church from the state. In accordance with this law the state cannot interfere in the internal affairs of the religious bodies, neither can the church interfere in the affairs of the state, that is to say in the workings of the political, economic, and cultural organisations, the health services and the education system.

The state gives over free of charge all church buildings (which are considered the property of the whole people) and objects of reverence to the church authorities for conducting religious services.

In the USSR today there are more than 20,000 Orthodox churches, Roman Catholic churches, synagogues, Lutheran churches, Old Believers churches, mosques, Buddhist *datsan*, and prayer houses, belonging to the Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists. There are also some 20 monasteries and convents.

The church has the right to train its own priests in special secondary and higher educational institutions, of which there are 18 at present, including six Orthodox academies and semi-

naries, two Catholic seminaries, a Muslim academy and a *medresse* and a Jewish *yeshivot*.

The religious centres are able to publish their own ecclesiastical literature: the Bible, the Koran, theological works, prayer books, magazines and church calendars. Thus, for example, the Russian Orthodox Church publishes six periodicals and is putting out continuously theological works. In the last few years the Bible has been published twice in a huge circulation. A second edition of the New Testament has just been printed and the works of the late Patriarch Aleksiy have been published in a four-volume edition, while the works of Patriarch Pimen are at present being prepared for publication.

Two editions of the Koran have been published and a new edition is soon to appear. The Muslim Lunar Calendar is published regularly and the periodical *Muslims of the Soviet East* is published in four languages (Uzbek, Arabic, English and French). The jubilee of the famous Muslim theologian and scholar Ismail Bukhari was celebrated with the publication of a two-volume edition of his book *Al-Sakhikh al Bukhari*.

There are 39 specialised establishments engaged in the manufacture of items required for religious purposes such as candles and matzoth which fully satisfy the requirements. All the necessary material for these factories are provided by the state.

The finances of the church made up of voluntary contributions are not taxed.

The various faiths may hold all-Union or local congresses to decide their internal matters and elect their leadership.

Soviet law has established special legal norms protecting the interests of believers, religious institutions and the clergy. They include prosecution in the event of any interference in the holding of religious services, provided the latter do not cause a disturbance or infringe the liberties of citizens. All discrimination on religious grounds is banned by law as also is violation of conscience. Refusing work or admission to a school or college, dismissal from work or expulsion from a school or college, deprivation of privileges established by the law or any other limi-

tation of rights on religious grounds may lead to prosecution under Article 142 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

Thus, freedom of conscience is firmly guaranteed in the USSR. Soviet legislation on religious matters guarantees the interests of believers and non-believers alike.

Some people in the West claim that there is no real freedom of religious activity in the USSR. But what is meant by religious activity?

Western propaganda claims that freedom of conscience means allowing religious population to act in any way they feel disposed. The answer to this is that no state in the world would remain indifferent to violations of the legal code and the generally accepted norms of social behaviour perpetrated under the guise of religious observance. Believers may be guided by only such precepts as do not contradict the law.

It is natural that Soviet laws regulate relations between the church and the state and clearly formulate the rights of the church and the faithful. The church is given full independence in the satisfaction of the spiritual demands of the faithful. This right is protected by Soviet law.

According to Soviet law every religious organisation can only operate after it has been officially registered. The fact of registration means that a religious organisation undertakes to observe the laws and the laws in turn guarantee to protect the freedom of religious worship. A religious organisation may be refused registration if the aims and methods of its work, its teaching or the conduct of its services involve violation of the law or infringement on the rights and freedoms of the individual.

The Orthodox Church does not enjoy any special privileges over other religions in the USSR. All faiths in the USSR possess equal rights and only one duty—not to transgress Soviet law.

Relations between the state and the church in the USSR are conducted by a special state body—the USSR Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Soviet legislation affords the church complete independence in the running of its own affairs, but at the same time forbids

using religious assemblies for political purposes that are directed against the interests of the Soviet state, inciting believers to renounce their civic duties and encouraging them to refrain from participating in the socio-political life of the country. It also forbids the holding of fanatical rites, which may endanger the health of citizens and deceptive practices which encourage superstition (such as spreading rumours about 'the end of the world', and organising miracle healing hoaxes near so-called 'holy places'). The religious organisations do not have the right to compel their members to pay any contributions or dues.

This in no way infringes the freedom of conscience, which is why the clergy in the USSR honourably fulfil the demands of Soviet legislation and adopt a loyalist position with regard to the state.

The Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, the All-Union Congress of Evangelical Christian Baptists, the Council of the Old Believers, the Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church and many other similar conferences that have been held throughout the seventies have shown the political loyalty of the clergy and their support for the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet state.

There are frequent reports in the West about persons on trial in the USSR or serving sentences for their religious beliefs. These simply have no basis in reality. 'It would be foolish to claim,' said A. E. Klimenko, Chairman of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, 'that any member of the congregation of our church or of any other would be brought to trial simply because he professed a certain faith. Soviet legislation does not prosecute citizens for holding religious views or practising them.'

Never in the history of Soviet legislation has there been any law which envisages punishment for religious views, or for any other views for that matter. Only those people who violate Soviet law or incite others to do so are prosecuted in the Soviet Union.

There are, however, certain individuals who under the guise

of acting in accordance with their religious beliefs pursue careerist or selfish aims, trying at times to bend the law and encourage dissatisfaction among the faithful with the policies of the Soviet state towards religion. These people operate mostly in small sectarian groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals, which are usually characterised by the fanatical nature of their services and the health hazards they cause to their members.

Some of the leaders of these sectarian groups in their attempts to keep control over their acolytes forbid their participation in social life. They try to stop them from visiting places of cultural interest, from watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers, going to the doctor for medical treatment and even from doing their military service. All these activities are considered violations of Soviet law and the rights and duties of citizens of the USSR, which are the same for believers and non-believers alike. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that activities of this sort are punishable under the law.

It is these people that certain unscrupulous reporters in the West try to present from time to time to their public as 'heroes' of a mythical 'religious front', who are being 'persecuted' for their religious convictions.

Many guests from abroad, including members of the clergy, visit the USSR.

In 1975, more than 100 ecclesiastical delegations visited the USSR from all over the world. Of these there was not one who reacted negatively to Soviet policy on religion.

Dr. Robert Marshall, head of the delegation of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, said in an interview with an *Izvestia* correspondent in January 1976 that his delegation had listened to sermons in many churches and was quite convinced that it was the Christian virtues that were being propagated there: love for your fellow man, and peace and good-will among men. They learned how priests were trained in the USSR and were very impressed with what they saw. They not only met their brothers in Christ, he said, but also the leaders of the Jewish communities and were convinced of their well-being.

In an interview with an APN correspondent the General Secretary of the People's Council for Islamic Affairs of Malaysia, Dato Hadji Ismail Bin Pandjag Arisa said: 'We are convinced that there is religious freedom in the USSR. Believers hold their services with complete freedom, and the holy places are maintained in good condition. We met believers and chatted to them. They gave their opinions quite freely.' After holding prayers at the Mosque of Hadji Alambardar, the head of the Malaysian delegation said: 'We'd been lied to by foreign propaganda. Our opinion of the conditions for Muslims in the Soviet Union has changed. We now know that hearing is one thing, seeing another.'

All those who want to know about the real position of religion in the USSR can be assured of the fact that the various religious faiths have a guaranteed right to existence and that there is freedom of conscience which is proclaimed in Lenin's decree on the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church.

We have already looked at the work of the organs of state power and the way they run the country, trying at the same time to give the foreign reader some idea of the principal difference between them and parliaments, governments and city councils in the bourgeois countries. But the whole point of Soviet democracy, as we have continued to stress, is that it is not limited to democratisation, even in its widest form, of the 'classical' forms. No, we in the Soviet Union have gone considerably further, spreading democratic principles throughout society. So, having shown democracy vertically, so to speak, from the local Soviets to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, we now wish to consider it horizontally, as it applies to the various environments in which the Soviet citizen lives and works, and the various forms of social relations.

Let us begin with the fact that in the Soviet Union the working man has an important role to play in determining and running the economic policy of the country.

Capitalism excludes the participation of the workers in production management.

Whereas bourgeois democracy deprives the workers of the opportunity to take part in managing the economy, the successful development of the socialist economy is unthinkable without the widest involvement in direct economic management. The Soviet state is vitally interested in the largest possible circle of working people participating directly in the management and improvement of production. On the other hand, all the working people are interested in social production being developed and improved. Therefore, the role of the mass organisations, and primarily the trade unions, in running the country's economy continues to grow.

The successes of the Soviet economy are directly linked to the development of democracy. After all, the economic system of socialism does not simply promote the conditions for the democratisation of the whole of social life, it insistently demands such democratisation, for it is precisely this that is one of the most important conditions of its consistent development.

Soviet economic policy today is a policy guaranteeing in conditions of the scientific and technical revolution the increasingly fuller utilisation of the advantages of the socialist system and raising the overall productivity of labour and the effectiveness of social production.

In its basis and essence this policy serves the interests of the people. It is determined with the direct and active participation of the masses, and is the embodiment of their will, experience and common sense. It is implemented by the labour of the people and everything that is achieved in the course of this implementation goes for the benefit of the people. Its main aim and orientation is to raise the standard of living of the working people.

Socialism has made material production an important field for the creativity of the individual. Economic progress has become the foundation for the growth in living standards and the all-round development of each member of society. But improving the conditions of existence, raising the qualifications of the workers, revealing the individual capabilities of each Soviet worker has become decisive to the development of production. The unity of individual and social interests indissolubly links the life of each citizen with the increased wealth of society and offers wide opportunities for revealing the creative capacities of each man in work and social activity.

This has meant that the working people play a more fruitful and active part in handling the general economic problems facing an enterprise or an individual industry and in the drawing up of current and long-term plans for the national economy as a whole.

The working people actively participate in all levels of the

administrative process: setting economic development targets, taking and carrying out decisions and exercising control over production. The forms of this participation are continually being improved both through the state organs and through the wide network of mass public organisations headed by the Communist Party.

An important place among these public organisations is held by the trade unions. One of the most important characteristics of the Soviet trade unions consists in that they participate directly in the development of the whole of society, in raising production, increasing efficiency and managing the economy.

At the 25th CPSU Congress it was stressed that the work of the trade unions directly promotes democratic methods in the field of production. On the initiative of the Soviet trade unions and with their direct participation the Fundamentals of Labour Legislation were drawn up. The trade unions participate in the formulation of laws and regulations governing working conditions, check the observance of labour legislation and supervise the norms of labour protection and safety techniques. The trade unions take care of social insurance, the cost of which is fully met by the state and is available to all industrial workers and office employees alike.

Soviet trade unions work within the society of developed socialism, and it is this which determines their chief characteristics. In their struggle to uphold the interests of the working people they have progressed far from the limits of a purely 'defensive' organisation, since in the USSR the exploiting classes have long been abolished. But, of course, even now the trade unions are called upon to protect the working people from excessive departmental zeal and bureaucracy, which unfortunately still occurs. This function they perform very resolutely. For example, the magazine *Sovetskiye Profsoyuzy* (Soviet Trade Unions) published in November 1975 some very interesting information: in the previous two years more than 5,000 executives (including foremen and managers) had been dismissed from their posts at the request of the trade unions and more than 30,000 had been fined

for violation of the labour protection laws and safety techniques.

Overtime in the USSR is permitted in exceptional circumstances and then only with the agreement of the trade-union committee at an enterprise. However, the director of the Grodov brick factory, a certain M. Sinitsky, put up a notice: 'A Day off is a Working Day'. The Presidium of the Trade-Union Council demanded his immediate dismissal and this was put into effect.

What do these facts tell us? That, in the words of the proverb, every basket has a bad apple, and that the USSR like any other country has its unsolved problems. But further, they show that the Soviet trade unions possess all the powers to carry out their defensive functions.

At Soviet enterprises the trade-union organisation can demand the dismissal of any executive, whereas the administration cannot demand the dismissal of a worker without the preliminary written consent of the factory or local trade-union committee.

This is established in the Regulation on the Rights of Local Trade-Union Committees which was approved by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and made effective in 1971. In accordance with this act the powers of the trade-union committees and their responsibility for the work of the collectives were significantly increased. In representing the employees in all aspects of production, labour and cultural activities, the trade unions enjoy the rights of legal persons. They have the right to participate in deciding questions affecting production and in the drawing up and implementation of plans. They have equal rights with the administration in disposing of the material incentive, social and cultural facilities and housing funds, which are provided for out of the profits made by the enterprise. They have the right to attend directors' meetings and hear reports on plan fulfilment and contract obligations and demand the elimination of deficiencies.

The Regulation on the Rights of Local Trade-Union Committees illustrates the evolution of the powers of the trade unions

in the USSR. Formerly the Regulation was approved by the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and only set out the rights and functions of the trade-union committees without indicating the duties of the administration. Now this document has been approved by the collective head of state—the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—and together with the rights of the trade-union committees it details the duties of the administration in creating the necessary conditions for work, rest, training personnel and improving safety techniques.

During the Ninth Five-Year Plan period a number of legislative acts were passed designed to expand the legal basis of the work of the trade unions. Thus in 1973 and 1974, worker participation in production management (via the trade-union organisations) was considerably increased. Representatives of the trade-union organisations are now required to attend meetings of the board of directors. No matters relating to the organisation of labour, leisure and exchange of know-how can be decided without trade union participation.

Without the agreement of the trade-union committee the management cannot review work rates, distribute the incentive funds, fix a pay system (whether piece-work or on a time basis), classify workers or determine the number of workers in this or that section. The trade-union organisation has the right to stop work on any machine if it considers that safety regulations have not been met with.

Working conditions, the holiday rota, the distribution of the material incentive, cultural facilities, housing funds, resources for improving labour protection and safety measures, the allocation of housing and many other matters that affect the interests of the workers can only be decided by the management in agreement or together with the trade-union committee.

The appointment of workers to positions of importance within the enterprise also requires the opinion and advice of the trade-union committee. Even the director of an enterprise cannot be appointed by the ministry without the approval of the Central Trade-Union Committee of the particular industry. In case the

director of an enterprise tries to bend the law the trade-union organisations are entitled to request that persons guilty of such infringements are brought to account.

If individual officials infringe upon the rights of the working people, the trade-union organisation (at a level not less than the regional) may demand from the administration annulment of any collective agreement concluded with them or their removal from any post they occupy. This right is exercised by the trade-union bodies in situations where executives do not observe the labour laws, or fail to meet their collectively contract obligations or become excessively bureaucratic. The appeal against the demand for the annulment of a collective contract or the removal of an executive may be made to the higher standing trade-union body, whose decision remains final.

At the 25th Congress of the CPSU it was declared that the task of the trade unions is to develop the working people's productive and social activity, to improve the forms and methods of their participation in production management. One of the most active forms of such participation are the standing production committees which have become important bodies for drawing the workers into management. Their role grew particularly during the Ninth Five-Year Plan period after the adoption of a special regulation on standing production committees by the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. This regulation has established the responsibility of executives for carrying out the decisions and suggestions made by these committees.

The standing committees are entitled to listen to the reports made by executives at the enterprises on the current state of work, on the finances and on other important matters affecting production. The administration issues orders on the basis of the decision taken by the committees, sees that they are carried out and reports on their results to the standing committees. All this means that the standing production committees have considerable prestige.

In the Soviet Union today there are approximately 130,000

standing production committees, consisting of 5.4 million elected representatives, 65 per cent of whom are industrial workers. Besides industrial workers, the standing production committees are made up of representatives from the administration, party and trade-union and other public organisations. In the last five years alone these committees have made 8 million suggestions, the majority of which have been adopted and given practical realisation in production. They undoubtedly have a considerable effect on the economy and improve the conditions of work and rest.

It is here that we see the successful combination of one-man management and collective decision-making, whereby the knowledge and experience of the executives are supplemented by that of the men on the shop floor.

Broad sections of the working population directly participate in managing production within their work collectives through worker' meetings, through the conclusion and fulfilment of collective contracts between the trade union and the management, through the standing production committees and through the various forms of public control.

People's control is an important form of mass participation in production management.

Checking on the fulfilment of the tasks of economic and cultural construction and the all-round strengthening of state discipline are the essence of the work of the organs of people's control. It is obvious that such a definition of the tasks and functions of control covers all aspects of state and social activity.

The organs of people's control are empowered to check the implementation of party and government directives and supervise the execution of state plans. They can check the work of enterprises, ministries and departments and have the right to demand materials and documents from management executives, review the state of production and finances and deal with any illegal activity on the part of officials. The organs of people's control are empowered to hear the reports and explanations of officials, indicate their shortcomings and, where necessary, pass

the matter on for discussion by the collective or public organisations. Thus, great importance is attached primarily to preventative measures and public pressure in the case of individuals who have shortcomings in their work.

Should these measures turn out to be insufficient, disciplinary action may be taken against the guilty party up to and including dismissal from his post. The organs of people's control have wide powers to ensure that labour discipline is observed and are completely intolerant of any manifestation of bureaucracy or other abuses.

The democratic nature of people's control is shown primarily in its structure.

Looked at vertically, it appears like this: the USSR Committee of People's Control, then the committees of the Union and Autonomous republics, then the territorial, regional, town and district committees. At the bottom of the pyramid are the people's control units attached to the village and settlement Soviets, enterprises, collective and state farms, institutions and organisations.

After the April-May elections of 1976 there were 649,000 groups and 659,000 people's control posts. They included prestigious activists from among industrial workers, collective farmers, office employees, specialists, workers in the press, radio and television.

There are 9.6 million people's controllers in the USSR, of which 4.5 million are workers and 1.6 million collective farmers, more than a third of whom are women. The number of controllers with a high level of general and professional training has increased, which raises their overall effectiveness in dealing with highly complex problems. Furthermore, there are thousands of activists, consultants and specialists who participate in the people's control units.

Thus, the Moscow Committee of People's Control is composed of 19 members, including two workers who are Heroes of Socialist Labour, the director of a Moscow factory, an academician, a representative of the city party committee, a

secretary of the city Komsomol committee and the head of the city statistical bureau. They have at their disposal a large and qualified group of activists and voluntary workers.

This type of democratic people's control can only exist under socialism. After all, control in capitalist society has always remained the province of a narrow circle whose task it is to serve the interests of the capitalists.

The basic aims of people's control in the Soviet Union can be briefly outlined as follows: serving the interests of the state and society as a whole, struggling with departmentalism and regionalism, achieving higher efficiency and quality in the fulfilment of the national economic plans in the interest of the people and raising their material and cultural standards.

To illustrate these aims and the means of their achievement, let us consider one of many examples.

In 1975, in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic a massive campaign was held to check whether the necessary economies were being made in all sections of the republic's industry and agriculture. 550,000 people's controllers took part in the campaign, including professional activists, Komsomol members, leading production workers and specialists. The campaign was widely publicised in the press and discussed in the work collectives and its results were summed up in the Soviet and party organs.

As a result of careful work over several months the people's controllers revealed considerable latent reserves of power and materials and made a number of effective suggestions for economising millions of kilowatt-hours of electricity, hundreds of tons of metal, cement and other materials.

But the work of the organs of people's control is aimed not only at eliminating individual deficiencies. Much of its work consists in preventing mistakes and blunders and achieving general improvement in all fields of production, management and services. A deep study of the questions at issue and a summary of the results of the checks made allow the organs of people's control to make judgement on the state of affairs in individual industries and sections of these industries and make suggestions

of national importance to the appropriate administrative bodies.

The Soviet control organs, working under the guidance of the CPSU, function to a certain extent as a kind of school. They instil in people a feeling of high responsibility for the common cause.

Thus, the people's control groups at enterprises act decisively against everything that runs counter to the interests of the state and the people and curb any attempts to obviate the law, no matter what their origin.

Their work occasionally meets with resistance from certain executives, who try to obstruct it. In this case the norms of Soviet democracy are unambiguous—any attempt to obstruct the work of the people's control units or repress their criticism is considered an offense, and those found guilty may be liable to dismissal from their posts, and the materials against them forwarded to the courts.

The organs of control rely for their energy and strength on the broad masses of the working people. A deep concern for the work of their enterprises and a thrifty attitude to the use of resources throughout the country are the distinguishing features of the character and communist consciousness of the Soviet people as expressed in their social activity.

The theme: 'Soviet Man Is the Master of His Country' is truly inexhaustible and innumerable examples may be adduced to illustrate it. Open any Soviet newspaper and you will undoubtedly find letters or notes from ordinary citizens. Some Soviet newspapers have a special feature for letters of this kind. In *Pravda*, for example, it is called 'Readers' Suggestions' and 'If I Were the Director...' in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

The vast majority of these letters do not contain personal complaints but concern for society as a whole.

A considerable proportion of the Soviet population lives in rural areas. There, alongside the state farms, an important role is played by the collective farms, or *kolkhozy* as they are known internationally.

Organising the life and work of more than 15 million collective farmers is a matter of constant concern of the Soviet state.

The collective-farm peasantry are an active section of the labour force, and *kolkhoz* democracy is one of the inalienable features of Soviet democracy.

The collective-farm peasantry take active participation in running the state and in managing the affairs of the *kolkhoz*. The Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers noted: 'From the political point of view the collective-farm system has strengthened the Soviet state and its main foundation, the union between workers and peasants, and ensured real opportunities for the peasantry to participate in social production and matters of national significance.'

Participation of the collective-farm peasantry in management is carried out via the Soviets of People's Deputies, which are the national elected organs of state power, and also—and this is a characteristic feature of Soviet democracy—via specific collective-farm bodies, which make up the system of the collective-farm democracy and include: intra-*kolkhoz* management bodies, inter-*kolkhoz* management enterprises, *kolkhoz* councils and collective farmers' congresses.

The system of collective-farm democracy is continually improved as the collective-farm system and Soviet society as a whole develop. The functions of these organs have become particularly extensive today, which demonstrates the growth of their social role in developed socialist society.

A collective farm is a democratic organisation of working peasants united for the joint running of a large-scale socialist agricultural production. In conformity with Article 45 of the General Rules of the Collective Farm, management of its affairs is carried out on the basis of the active participation of collective farmers in the solution of all questions appertaining to the *kolkhoz*.

Every member of the collective farm has the right to elect and be elected to the collective-farm management bodies and to make suggestions for improving their activity and eliminating shortcomings in their work. At the same time active participation in the management of the *kolkhoz* is the duty of each of its members.

The system of intra-*kolkhoz* management bodies, which is envisaged in the General Rules and specified in the individual rules of each *kolkhoz*, ensures the real opportunity for collective-farm members to participate in management. All important questions affecting the life of the collective farm are dealt with by its collective organs: the general meeting of all members of the collective farm, the meeting of representatives, the meetings of brigade members, the board of collective farm and brigade councils. Collective-farm democracy, of course, also presupposes one-man management. However, collective farm's officials including its chairman, are only responsible for the implementation of decisions, taken collectively.

At their meetings the collective farmers discuss important questions affecting the production and everyday life of their farm, bring forward new problems that require discussion or difficulties that may arise, indicate ways to overcome them, point out shortcomings and criticise any wrong actions on the part of the administration.

The meetings are also called upon to bring influence to bear on those members of the collective farm who are unconscientious about their work or break the rules of the collective farm or infringe labour discipline.

At collective-farm meetings one frequently hears just claims

being made against state bodies and organisations or their individual representatives, and the latter usually take careful notice of the criticisms of the collective farmers. This, on the one hand, raises the prestige of the meetings and helps solve important problems, and, on the other, raises the responsibility of the officials in the state bodies and organisations.

The intra-kolkhoz management bodies are, in terms of the tasks they are required to accomplish and the matters that fall within their competence, the pivot in the system of collective-farm democracy. In the process of intra-kolkhoz management decisions are made as to personnel (i.e. men are taken on or dismissed according to labour contracts), the production structure is determined, resources are allocated and work planned, incomes and output are distributed and produce sold, all necessary machinery and materials are acquired, and State Bank credit is taken up. The kolkhoz enjoys the exclusive right to dispose of the property and financial resources.

The kolkhoz management bodies also decide questions relating to the participation of the kolkhoz in inter-kolkhoz and state-farm enterprises and organisations, to its joining the amalgamations and to its enlargement or breaking down into smaller units. They review questions relating to the alteration of land areas within the kolkhoz and fix the borders of its land-tenure. It can thus be said that the kolkhoz management bodies exercise guidance over all the organisational, production, financial, social and educational work of the collective farm.

An important principle of collective-farm democracy is the electivity of the board, the chairman, the brigade leaders, the farm heads and other executive personnel and the audit commission and the responsibility and accountability of these organs and their executives to the members of the kolkhoz.

According to the Collective Farm Model Rules, the board, the chairman and the audit commission are elected by the general meeting for a period of three years by open or secret ballot. The vast majority of production organisers, who show themselves to be mature, responsible and principled workers and are highly

skilled at their job, are frequently re-elected to their posts. Unfortunately, however, there are some executives who do not justify the trust placed in them by the collective farmers and put their own personal interests above those of the collective or infringe state discipline. These are replaced by good administrators. Thus in 1973, 2,166 collective-farm chairmen were re-elected, and 371 former collective-farm chairmen replaced for having failed to cope with their duties.

The collective-farm rules establish the systematic accountability of the executive and administrative organs to the members of their collective farm for the work carried out in the kolkhoz. They also ensure the right to criticise the board, the audit commission and individual kolkhoz officials. The consistent implementation of the principles of collective-farm democracy guarantees the active participation of the collective-farm members and their initiative in running the affairs of the kolkhoz, trains them in running the affairs of state as a whole and ensures the observance of socialist legality.

The responsibility of officials to the collective-farm members who elect them is enhanced by the Model Rules' article which states that members of the board, the collective-farm chairman, and the chairman and members of the audit commission, who have not justified the confidence placed in them by the collective-farm members can be recalled ahead of time by a decision of the general meeting.

In the collective farms there are many other democratic forms of management. Many kolkhozy have formed their own agromonomical and technical councils and some have set up women's councils.

The principles of collective-farm democracy are applied in organising the administration of inter-kolkhoz production links. Kolkhoz participation in an inter-kolkhoz enterprise is shown, first of all, by the fact that more important questions relating to the organisation and work of such an enterprise are decided at a meeting of representatives from different collective farms or a council which contains representatives from each participating

kolkhoz. Within the competence of this highest organ of inter-kolkhoz management come such matters as the establishment of annual production and finance plans, and the list of personnel, estimation of administrative and economic expenditure, and yearly accounts, allocation of profits and losses, the decision of questions relating to the organisation and remuneration of labour and the adoption of new members. At the same time the inter-kolkhoz management bodies are obliged to report on their work to the general meeting of collective farmers.

A new and important step in the development of collective-farm and socialist democracy as a whole was the decision of the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers to form kolkhoz councils. These elected organs set up in the districts, regions, territories and republics and the Union are to promote the further democratisation of collective-farm management by means of collective discussion of important matters, sharing the experience of production organisation and making recommendations for a more rational utilisation of economic reserves. Their ultimate objective is the all-round strengthening of the collective-farm system.

In 1975, there were 2,417 kolkhoz councils in the USSR with a total membership of 85,000, 64,000 of whom were ordinary workers.

Over the last few years, the All-Union Kolkhoz Council has taken important decision as regards social insurance for collective farmers and explained the application of certain clauses of the Collective Farm Model Rules relating to such titles as 'Merited Collective Farmer', and 'Honoured Collective Farmer', as well as to the team councils; it has discussed and decided many other questions relating to collective-farm life.

Each year the collective farms take a more active part in the process of economic specialisation, the concentration of production and inter-economic cooperation by joining large-scale inter-kolkhoz and kolkhoz-sovkhoz (state-farm) amalgamations. This does not mean any loss of economic independence and they remain cooperatives both as regards the form of property and the

principles of distribution according to labour. At a time when production links between the various cooperatives are expanding and becoming more complex the role of the kolkhoz councils continues to increase, since they are required to bring contemporary management methods to the rural areas and provide solutions to important economic and social questions.

In the social life of the collective farm today complex problems frequently arise of a moral and psychological nature as well as those related purely to production. Sometimes conflicts arise over payments for the farmers' labour and labour discipline is violated. Problems of this kind come within the scope of the kolkhoz board and activists.

But the kolkhoz councils, too, take an active part in the social life in the rural areas, because they mostly consist of ordinary farmers and are therefore best suited to bring about a democratic solution to such conflicts as may arise in relations between members of the collective farm.

Thus, we can see that on the collective farms many of the principles that are characteristic of Soviet democracy as a whole, particularly the principle of direct democracy, are exercised to the full.

The population of the Soviet Union today is over 260 million, half of whom are under 30 years old. What place is given under Soviet democracy to youth? Continuing our horizontal view of Soviet democracy, we may say that the democratic norms and methods of Soviet society, which we have discussed above, apply to youth, too.

All the young men and women of the USSR and the Komsomol which unites the overwhelming majority of them are enthusiastically working to implement the tremendous plans for economic development outlined by the 25th Congress of the CPSU. The Communist Party looks upon youth as an active creative force among the Soviet people and is concerned that the younger generation and its vanguard, the Komsomol, should take active part in running the affairs of society and in the work of the state organs.

From the moment the Soviet Republic came into being the Communist Party has been drawing youth into state administration. An important role in this was played by the Decree of the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the RSFSR which was signed by Lenin in 1921 and entitled *On the Practical Training of the Russian Young Communist League*. The decree was designed to strengthen the organs of Soviet power with new reserves from among the ranks of the young workers and peasants.

Over the years of Soviet power and under conditions of socialist democracy the forms have been defined and the possibilities extended for the participation of youth in state construction.

The representation of youth in the organs of state and their broad participation in solving matters of economic, social and cultural importance are a clear demonstration of the democratic style of the Soviet system.

It is significant that more than half a million young people were elected to the Soviets of People's Deputies and there were 317 deputies to the Supreme Soviet in 1979 (21.1 per cent) under 30 years of age.

Each new election sees an increase in the number of young people elected to the Soviets. Today, there are 48,000 young members of the executive committees of the local Soviets.

An important place in strengthening the contacts between the organs of state power, on the one hand, and the younger generation, on the other, is held by the standing youth commissions that are attached to the Soviets of People's Deputies. According to the statistics for 1975 there were 11,927 such commissions with a membership of more than 80,000 deputies. These commissions are also attached to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics. Their work has had a noticeable effect on improving educational work, involving an increasing number of young people in production and exerting a positive influence on all aspects of their life. These commissions are concerned primarily with problems that directly affect the younger generation and its interests. For example, in 1973 the standing youth commissions together with the public education and cultural commissions of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR discussed the question of training qualified workers in the vocational training schools and their utilisation in various branches of the economy. In 1974, the youth commissions of both chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR studied the way Youth Labour Legislation was observed at the enterprises and in the organisations of the Ministry of Oil Refining and Petrochemical Industry. The youth commissions of the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics work just as actively. Thus, for example, the youth commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR examined a question of great importance for young men and women—the observation of legislation on students at extra-mural and evening institutes and technical colleges. The commission also heard details as to how its recommendations on the utilisation of young specialists were

being implemented. Commissions for work among youth have also been set up in the trade unions, creative workers' unions, and the *Znaniye* (Knowledge) society which disseminates political and scientific information.

In many republics, territories and regions the Soviets together with the Komsomol organisations take concrete steps to encourage political and social activity among the young deputies and persistently seek out and improve ways and means of working with them. Meetings between young deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at the Komsomol Central Committee have become traditional, and such meetings regularly take place at the Komsomol Central Committees of the Union republics, and in the territorial, regional, town and district committees.

The local Soviets attach considerable importance to the training of young deputies, and special schools are set up and seminars held for this purpose. 'Young Deputy's Days' have become traditional. During these days young deputies listen to lectures on state law, the Soviet system and on the fundamentals of Soviet legislation and exchange experience with their fellows.

Of special importance in the life of Soviet youth is its mass public organisation—the Komsomol, which numbers about 38 million members.

The Komsomol has always been an active supporter of the party not only in such matters as the communist education of youth, but in everything relating to state, economic and cultural development. The Party pays consistent attention to raising the role and prestige of the Komsomol in this respect. Together with the other public organisations the Komsomol actively participates in the formation and work of the organs of state power. In the 1979 elections, 207 members of the Komsomol were elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. This figure represents 13.8 per cent of the total membership. In the local Soviets, 413,000, or 18.7 per cent of the membership, were elected from the Komsomol.

In 1977, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol became member of the Presidium of the Supreme So-

viet of the USSR, which reflects the growing role of the Komsomol in state and social administration.

A good tradition has been established for the Komsomol to be represented in the various organs of state administration and in the electoral organs of public organisations. Now there are Komsomol representatives of the executive committees of the Ministries of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, of Public Education, and Culture, the Committee for Physical Culture and Sports, the People's Control Committee, the Presidium of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the Presidium of the USSR Voluntary Society for the Promotion of the Army, Air Force and Navy, and several other organisations.

All this allows Komsomol organisations to take an active part in the work of the legislative and executive organs as well as in the work of the Soviets and the public organisations and to provide practical decisions on matters relating to the satisfaction of the needs and requirements of youth.

In recent years the rights of the Komsomol in all spheres of social life have increased. It is a matter of everyday experience in the Soviet Union for many suggestions concerning the life and work of young people to be submitted to the state organs by the Komsomol. From 1963 to 1973, some 250 government directives were drawn up and adopted with the participation of the Komsomol.

The Komsomol committees and the Soviets work to enforce Soviet law and come out against all forms of law-breaking. In many towns and districts there are popular universities and faculties of law. This is natural for Soviet democracy which aims to educate conscious citizens, who not only participate in the elections every two or five years, but in the daily work of the state and its organs. Great importance is given to making sure every citizen understands the essence of Soviet legislation, knows his rights and duties as a citizen and has a high feeling of responsibility for his actions.

An example of the connections between the Komsomol and the Soviets of People's Deputies is their joint study of the causes

of juvenile delinquency and the ways and means to combat it. Here educational work is of tremendous significance. For example, on the initiative and with the help of the Leningrad Komsomol organisations joint decisions are taken annually by the city Komsomol committee and the city Soviet executive committee for the organisation of youth summer holidays. By the efforts of the young people alone more than 300 youth and children clubs were set up locally, with a total membership of more than 80,000. This form of organisation of summer camps has been taken up in many other towns throughout the Soviet Union.

The Komsomol plays an important role in creating the material and technical basis of communism. With the help of the party organisations the Komsomol committees try to find ways for increasing the labour activity of teenagers which correspond to the character and principles of the work of a youth organisation. They study those questions which are of paramount concern to young people, such as the acquisition of a profession, raising their qualifications and organising their work and leisure.

It was the Komsomol that encouraged youth to work all out on such major projects as large-scale hydro-electric power stations, mines, metallurgical and chemical enterprises and railways. This work was highly appraised at the 25th Congress of the CPSU.

The Komsomol has assumed patronage over some important projects, such as the giant Kama Automobile Works, oil and gas exploration in Western Siberia, the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly, the Sayany-Shushenskoye Hydro-Electric Power Station, the Krasnodar Reservoir, the Kara-Kum Canal, and many others. Young people have made a tremendous contribution to the project of the century—the Baikal-Amur Railway. The Komsomol organisations of each republic, territory, region, town and district have their own urgent projects, where young people can be seen working to achieve better quality production, better conditions for study, life and leisure.

But the effectiveness of their participation in running the affairs of society depends on the level of young people's educa-

tion and general culture. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that such great attention is devoted in the USSR to matters of education and culture, primarily that of the youth. Society is concerned that the younger generation participates fully in social activity, because it is they who are to be the builders of the new, communist society.

Everyone who has visited the Soviet Union probably have seen people on the streets in civilian clothes wearing the red arm-band of the *druzhinnik*. Many also have heard of the comrades' court. But what above all surprises them, especially if they come from the United States, is the fact that one can walk with absolute safety through the parks and streets of any Soviet town at night.

I have been asked on many occasions by audiences abroad how it is that the Soviet government has managed to reduce crime.

In answering these questions I usually start by pointing out that the number of legal officials and militia per thousand of the population is less in the USSR than in the bourgeois countries, and that our methods of combatting crime are quite unlike those in the capitalist countries. Our solution is simple—reliance on the citizens themselves. Furthermore, it is in accordance with the very spirit of Soviet democracy.

I have already mentioned the role the public plays in the life of Soviet society. There is hardly a matter of importance, whether affecting the nation as a whole or just the interests of a small street or apartment block, in which the citizens themselves do not participate.

One aspect of Soviet life, where the influence of public opinion is shown in its most positive light, is law and order. Strengthening the law in the Soviet understanding of the term is a task not only for the state but for the Communist Party, trade unions, Komsomol and other public organisations, and, of course, the citizens themselves.

The Soviet state has created firm guarantees to ensure the

interests and rights of the population, the maintenance of social property and the inviolability of the gains of the working people. Legislature, courts and administrative organs are called upon to exercise and protect the law and enforce law and order. But the aim in the Soviet Union is wider and more humane than this—it is not so much to punish for infringements of law and order, as to educate the public to reject what is bad and accept what is good.

Certain forms of public participation in the administration of justice and the maintenance of public order, such as the comrades' courts and the people's *druzhinniki* have already become part of Soviet legal system. They have now gained considerable experience of work among the people and bringing influence to bear upon those citizens who are inclined to violate the norms of social behaviour.

For example, a typical form of public participation in combatting crime are the comrades' courts. Today many cases of infringements of public order are passed straight to them. The comrades' courts are public organs. They are elected at enterprises, educational establishments, collective and state farms, rural Soviets, and house, street and block committees. They handle such matters as the infringement of labour discipline and minor violations of public order, when these have occurred for the first time and do not represent a danger to the public, or other cases which the people's courts and the militia consider would be more appropriately handled by the comrades' courts. Punishment inflicted by the comrades' courts is restricted to warning and public censure. The comrades' courts also have the right to pass on to the people's courts any case they consider a serious breach of the law.

The *druzhiny* were formed on the initiative of the working people. They are public organisations in no way attached to the militia, but they act in concert with them. Service as a *druzhinnik* is completely voluntary, but they have their higher organs which are elected at general meetings of the *druzhinniki*. The *druzhinniki* fulfil their duty without any additional rewards in

their free time. Their main objective is to prevent any form of anti-social behaviour, and the methods they use are persuasion and education.

The *druzhinniki* take an active part in combatting petty thefts of socialist property, hooliganism, drunkenness, profiteering and infringements of the trade laws.

Numbering more than 8 million people, 60 per cent of whom are communists or Komsomol members, the *druzhinniki* have gained for themselves considerable prestige among the population and shown that they are able to carry out successful preventative and educational work.

In 1974, the CC CPSU and the USSR Council of Ministers adopted a resolution, entitled On Further Improvements in the Work of the Voluntary People's *Druzhiny* in their Maintenance of Public Order. At the same time an ordinance of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet On the Basic Rights and Duties of the Voluntary People's *Druzhiny* in their Maintenance of Public Order was also adopted. This has become the legal basis for work of those socially conscious people, who together with the militia uphold the public order in Soviet towns and villages.

The local Soviets of People's Deputies, the organs of internal affairs, the judiciary, the public procurator's office, and the courts help the *druzhiny* in organising and planning their work, and in running educational programmes for their members, in which great use is made of the services of the law faculties of the people's universities, as well as lectures and seminars.

In accordance with the programme drawn up by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice the legal education of the *druzhinniki* is carried out at enterprises, institutions, state and collective farms.

The main aim of the people's *druzhiny* is to prevent infringements of the law. Therefore, work with youth is of great importance in their overall activity. Yes, we too in the Soviet Union have youths who spend their evenings around street corners, drinking and getting into fights. And, as everyone knows, this may lead to far more serious crimes. Thus, the

prime duty of every *druzhinnik* is to keep an eye on these young people and try to get them to take up more purposeful and useful forms of activity. It is at this point that maintaining public order is closely linked with the work of the cultural centres, sport societies and educational institutions. The local Soviets who guide the work of the *druzhiny* and who run the majority of the above institutions, coordinate their efforts to ensure that no youth is allowed to go freely down the road to crime.

Recently another form of public participation in maintaining law and order has been developed. This is the organisation of support posts designed to help the militia and the public in crime prevention. The councils of these posts coordinate the work of the local militia, the comrades' courts, the *druzhiny*, the house committees and militia's juvenile offenders' rooms. Together with deputies of the Soviets and cultural and sports institutions they carry out mass educational and cultural work among the population. These posts have been set up in many areas in Moscow.

The posts are on duty from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily and respond immediately to any complaint about disorderly behaviour, whether in the home or in the street.

In the USSR there are strict laws against drunkenness, hooliganism, and parasitism (i.e. refusing to work). These offences come very much within the scope of the support posts, where lists are kept of persons who are likely to break the law in this manner. In some cases all that is necessary is a good talking to, in others it may be necessary to contact the offender's employers. If both these methods fail to produce the necessary results the case may have to be passed on to the courts.

The councils of the support posts frequently request the people's courts that their hearings be held in the neighbourhood with the participation of public prosecutors. They then inform all the local inhabitants of the date and place of such a hearing.

At meetings of the support post councils those who have been guilty of infringements are reprimanded. Reports are also heard from local militia inspectors and probation officers who are re-

sponsible for the behaviour of difficult youths, and matters relating to problem homes are discussed. It often happens after a discussion that the council makes its suggestions to the party and Soviet organs. Members of the council visit the places where the offenders work and maintain close contact with the public organisations of their work collectives.

Thus, the support posts not only deal with offences as they arise, but in many cases are able to prevent them.

I have gone into a certain amount of detail on one of the latest and most successful forms of involving wide sections of the population in strengthening the social order. But taken together all these forms comprise one more characteristic feature of Soviet democracy—its extension into such spheres of social life as would be quite impossible in the capitalist countries.

BY WAY OF A POSTSCRIPT

By now I hope you will have a fairly good idea of Soviet democracy: its principles, form and content, the way the Soviet state is governed, the rights of Soviet citizens and how both vertically and horizontally democracy permeates the whole life of Soviet society.

Soviet democracy has existed and developed for more than 60 years and the experience gained during this period has shown beyond doubt that whatever difficulties may stand in the way of the Soviet state, socialist Soviet society continues to progress.

It is the traditional thing for a work of this kind to be rounded off with some kind of conclusion. I intend to break that tradition.

My task as I see it has been to tell the reader about Soviet democracy in the way Soviet people themselves see it and to present you with facts and figures.

You know the situation in your own country better than I do. It is, therefore, up to you to draw the conclusions for yourself.

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